

“Adequately watering your trees is the best way to ensure optimum growth and vigor during the summer months. Drought-stressed trees become susceptible to root and branch die-back and subsequent insect and disease problems.” -Donna Davis, Urban and Community Forestry Specialist for the Colorado State Forest Service.

The winter of 2025/2026 was hot and dry. To conserve our water reserves, Thornton has issued a level one drought protocol. As a Thornton resident, you know what that means for your home landscape, but what does it mean for your public landscape?

Thornton Parks will be joining you in water austerity this summer, but our restrictions will look slightly different. We will be letting most of our bluegrass turf stay dormant as long as possible. Weather permitting, we will not begin irrigating most bluegrass areas until May.

Parks and Recreation has permitted events on our ballfields, and to protect the players and the fields, we will be watering those areas. Irrigation will continue in areas where our water comes from non-potable sources. Watering grass with our lake water won't impact the Water Department's reserve of drinking water at all.

We also must charge up our irrigation systems with water to make sure that our backflow prevention devices are keeping irrigation water out of the municipal water. Even with our required watering, Parks has committed to reducing irrigation 10% from 2025 levels.

While Thornton Parks is committed to reducing water consumption during this drought, you may occasionally see our irrigation systems running. One of our top priorities is protecting our living infrastructure.

The trees of Thornton Parks represent a significant, long-term investment in public resources. Our trees provide shade, cooling, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and air purification. During these dry times, they require extra attention to live and to thrive.



The Colorado State Forest Service recommends approximately 10 gallons of water per inch of trunk diameter per tree per week. A large maple tree can require over 1,000 gallons of water a month to stay healthy.

Parks and Forestry will do our best to hand-water our most vulnerable trees, but to get water to the approximately 18,000 publicly owned trees in the City of Thornton, we will at times need to rely on our irrigation systems.