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Summer Lawn Tips  
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# A new SPIN

Staff photo by Michael D'Amico

**Above:** Ben Glosson's brass sprinkler waters his grass, garden and trees. Glosson said he waters his lawn twice a week, adding that watering it less increases resistance to drought. **Below:** Glosson trims a Japanese maple outside his Marietta home on Sunday. Although Cobb County has experienced rain showers here and there over the past week, hot and dry weather remain the norm, causing concerns over a possible drought in the area.

## Lawns, gardens need care to stay healthy in harsh summer ahead

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**MARIETTA** — Although Cobb County has experienced rain showers here and there over the past week, hot and dry weather remain the norm, causing concerns over a possible drought in the area.

Through at least the middle of August, most of Georgia will likely be warmer and drier than normal, said state climatologist David Stooksbury of the University of Georgia. He said warmer temperatures mean the soil loses more water to evaporation and plant water use.

That means homeowners and gar-



deners will need all the help they can get this summer in order to maintain

their lawns and gardens, without wasting water and increasing their bills.

For 10 years, Ildiko Nagy and her husband, Ben Glosson, have lived in their split-level home off Dow West Road in west Cobb. Their lawn is the envy of their neighbors, but the couple, who live with their three children, aren't proponents of doing much watering.

In dry conditions, Nagy said they typically water their front and back yards just twice a week with a sprinkler for about an hour and mow every two weeks, leaving the grass 4- to 6-inches long. They also have a small vegetable garden.

"We don't usually water it, which is probably something most people

### MORE INFORMATION ON LAWN CARE

The following are tips developed by waterSmart — a water conservation program initiated in 2000 by the Cobb County-Marietta Water Authority.

■ **Know your lawn's limits** — Established lawns, plants and shrubs need approximately 1 inch of water every seven to 10 days to remain healthy.

■ **Mow properly** — When your lawn needs a trim, raise mower blades to keep grass longer and encourage deeper rooting.

■ **Use rain barrels** — To save

Georgia's drinking water, build or buy your own rain barrel to catch water when that lucky shower pops up over your yard.

■ **Mulch** — Use mulch to maintain soil moisture around plants, trees and shrubs. Pine bark, nuggets and hardwood chips are best, but rocks, gravel and marble retain heat which can cause evaporation.

Don't forget, statewide watering restrictions went into effect June 2, 2010. Outdoor watering hours are 4 p.m. to 10 a.m.

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# Harsh

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do," said Nagy, 48.

"We don't have a sprinkler system or anything like that. At least once a season we let the grass grow all the way out to seed. Then mow it and try to let it re-seed itself, usually toward the end of the summer."

Allowing grass to re-seed itself allows it to grow thicker and richer in the next growing season.

"The lack of significant rainfall and the higher than normal temperatures in May and early June has definitely challenged area lawns and they are now showing signs of moisture and heat stress," said Marc Mayer, Atlanta & south region technical manager for TruGreen, a lawn care company.

To tell whether a lawn is stressed, Mayer recommends walking on it. If the foot prints don't bounce back after walking on it, that's a sign that it's suffering from heat or moisture stress, he said.

Acworth landscape architect Bruce Holliday of Landscape Plans Plus said lawn watering is where he sees the most mistakes made by homeowners. He said lawns only need 1 inch of water each week.

"Anything less than that is



Staff/Jon-Michael Sullivan

Ben Glosson's tomatoes and sweet banana peppers.

going to be evaporated before it does the roots any good. It would maybe cool the grass off a little bit, but it would not help the watering situation," said Holliday, a former Pike Nurseries landscape architect.

"The biggest mistake is people who take a water hose and a handheld watering device, and just sprinkle the lawn with 5 seconds worth of water. That is just an absolute, 100 percent waste of everything that you're doing."

Nagy and her husband are correct in allowing their grass to grow taller, Holliday said.

He said taller grass provides soil more shade, which reduces water evaporation. He advises using mulch in gardening, but avoiding dark colored mulch that attracts heat and stone mulch retains little moisture. Another tip is to

catch dripping water from air conditioning units to water annual flowers, such as petunias, geraniums and sunflowers.

"I don't know if I would put it on my vegetable garden unless you put a little treatment into," Holliday said. But "if you use it quite frequently, it should be crystal clear water that comes from condensation."

According to Stooksbury, north Georgia is presently classified as "abnormally dry," however continued dry weather could lead to drought conditions. Much of the rest of Georgia is currently suffering from drought. Gov. Nathan Deal has asked the federal government to declare 22 south Georgia counties disaster areas because of drought conditions.