** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online https://ksre-learn.com/horticulture-reducing-water-usage

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**Tips for reducing water usage**

K-State extension agent says technology can aid water savings at home

*By Lisa Moser, K-State Research and Extension news service*

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Technology is ever-present in our world, from cars that warn us when we accidentally drift lanes to watches that monitor our biometrics. Many would agree that these technologies offer beneficial information that keeps us safe and healthy.

Much like these monitoring systems, there are also advancements in home technologies that can improve our efficiency, especially when it comes to reducing water use, said Sedgwick County extension horticulture agent Matthew McKernan.

“There are a lot of water-saving technologies available to the public, such as high-efficiency washing machines and dishwashers,” McKernan said.

He also encourages homeowners to consider installing low-flow sinks and showerheads as well as water-conserving toilets to further reduce household water usage.

For people who pay for water that is sourced through the city or rural water district, that can mean financial savings said McKernan.

Along with exploring new technologies, McKernan said it is also important for homeowners to evaluate the current systems and fix any leaks that are found. And for those who are ready to make home improvements to improve water efficiency, McKernan said people should check to see if funding is available.

“Oftentimes, municipalities will incentivize replacing these indoor and even outdoor water-saving technologies through rebate programs to help people conserve water to benefit the entire community,” McKernan said.

In the past, those interested in conserving water outdoors often set up rain barrels to collect rainwater, and while that can still be an option for folks, McKernan said today there are outdoor watering systems with sensors that can be helpful in using water strategically.

“Two of the technologies that can be used outdoors are rain sensors that will prevent irrigation systems from watering when it is not needed, as well as smart irrigation controller technologies that base the irrigation schedules on weather data and landscape conditions, such as soil moisture, to address the water needs of the plants,” McKernan said.

As with monitoring the house for leaky faucets, McKernan reminds consumers that irrigation systems should also be routinely evaluated.

“It is easy for an irrigation head to get hit by a mower and break off, and if problems go unnoticed, we could have leaks and be wasting water,” McKernan said.
He encourages all Kansans to do their part in helping to conserve water.
“Unfortunately, the Earth’s water is a limited resource and that is not something people always think about when they turn on the faucet or hose, but small changes in how we manage the water can lead to a big impact,” McKernan said.

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