



Serving the Township of Verona since 1992

SUMMER 2024
NEWSLETTER



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THINKING BEYOND THE LAWN

The perfectly kept lawn is a potent symbol of the American Dream. Nevertheless, the lawn is a relatively new part of Americana and only really took hold after World War 2, when mass production of products like fertilizer and sprinklers began. Today, a pristinely manicured lawn is the crown jewel of suburban homeownership. But this aspect of curb appeal may be about to change.

Lawns are expensive for homeowners and the environment alike, requiring hundreds or even thousands of gallons of water. If this concerns you, try the following recommendations. Replace some of your grass with native plants. Not only do planting beds require less water, they are also beautiful and beneficial to our local ecosystem. We recommend placing them at the edges of the lawn and under trees. Start small.

Use a mulching mower and let your lawn become more natural. Change your lawn expectations. It is okay if your lawn is not a pristine, sterile area. On the bright side, it will require less water and evince natural beauty while offering the same opportunities for recreation.



Lawn Watering Calculations

According to the EPA, the average American household uses 320 gallons of water/day with 30% devoted to outdoor landscaping.

Purdue University ([see study](#)) assesses that lawns generally require one (1) inch of water per week with one inch of water equaling 0.62 gallons per square foot.

It takes about 10 minutes for 2/3 inch of water to be collected in open containers. Thus, a 15 minute watering plan would likely equal about an inch of water, the recommended amount of water that a lawn requires per week.

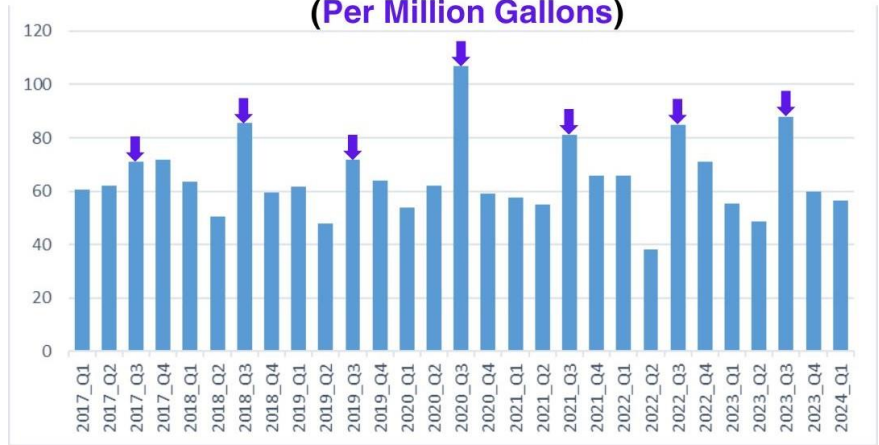
But many people water their lawns daily, or every other day, for long periods, which could vastly increase overall usage and costs.

Say your lawn area is 40 feet x 40 feet or 1600 square feet. $1600 \times 0.62 = 992$ gallons of water per week just for your lawn. And that's if you only limit watering to 15 minutes per week.

Depending upon your property; you could potentially have thousands of square feet of lawn that you water. For example, if you have 4,000+ square feet of lawn area, you could be using a minimum of 2,480 gallons per week just for your lawn. According to Verona's water rates, this same lawn could cost a minimum of \$265 for a 3 month season.

But we know that people usually water more than is needed, so the costs will likely exceed this conservative estimate. Sprinklers also tend to water our sidewalks, driveways, decks and patio areas; so, irrigation system adjustments may help you save real money.

Average Quarterly Usage per Residence (Per Million Gallons)



The upper chart shows **Verona's residential water usage from 2017 through the first quarter of 2024**. Typically, water usage spikes in the summer and unsurprisingly, 2020's use was significant. An increase in rain events should reduce the necessity of watering more than the required time recommended by Purdue.

The table on the left shows **Verona's water/sewer rates, surcharges and usage rates for 2024 through 2028**.

	<u>FY 2024</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>
Effective Date:	4/1/24	1/1/25	1/1/26	1/1/27	1/1/28
<u>WATER RATES:</u>	\$26.64	\$27.71	\$28.81	\$29.97	\$31.17
PFAS Surcharge (per meter)					
5/8"	\$ -	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$18.00
3/4"	\$ -	\$27.00	\$27.00	\$27.00	\$27.00
1"	\$ -	\$45.00	\$45.00	\$45.00	\$45.00
1 1/2"	\$ -	\$90.00	\$90.00	\$90.00	\$90.00
2"	\$ -	\$144.00	\$144.00	\$144.00	\$144.00
3"	\$ -	\$270.00	\$270.00	\$270.00	\$270.00
4"	\$ -	\$450.00	\$450.00	\$450.00	\$450.00
6"	\$ -	\$900.00	\$900.00	\$900.00	\$900.00
Volumetric Rate per Kgal					
	\$8.88	\$9.24	\$9.60	\$9.99	\$10.39
<u>SEWER RATES:</u>					
Quarterly Sewer Fee					
	\$159	\$165	\$172	\$179	\$186

Reducing H₂O Usage: Strategies Inside and Out

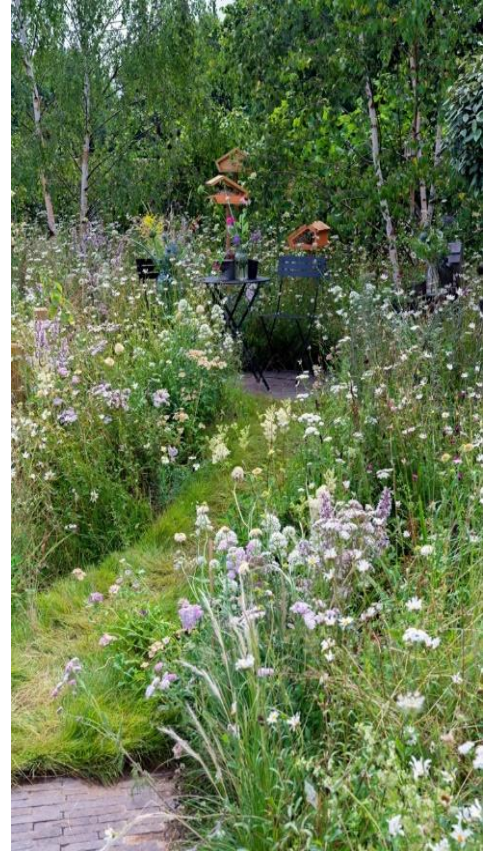
Lawn Reduction, Gardens, and Meadows:

One idea for lowering your outdoor watering needs without sacrificing yard beauty is to substitute areas of lawn with larger areas of wildflowers and native growth. Add a rain garden or do what is now being done across the country: lose the lawn in lieu of wildflower “meadows”.



Since the [2021 Wall Street Journal article](#) on the blossoming popularity of wildflower lawns, the trend has come to full bloom in front

and back yards alike. [The NY Times has also reported](#) on this water saving approach. Here are three excellent resources for getting started: [Jersey Yards](#), [Wild Seed Project](#), and some detailed information from [PennState Extension](#).



OUTSIDE STRATEGIES:

1. Invest in rain barrels to capture roof runoff for your gardens
2. Use a soaker hose (with your rain barrels) or a drip irrigation system
3. Adjust your irrigation system to water less frequently and use a rain sensor
4. Mulch in the spring/summer; use fall leaves as winter mulch
5. Water your plants during the coolest part of the day
6. Cut your lawn at a taller height and use a mulching attachment
7. Compost yard and vegetative food waste
8. Use a broom, not a hose, to clean your driveways, sidewalks, patios, and decks
9. Wash your car at the car wash (they use less water than you do)

INSIDE STRATEGIES:

1. Turn off water while brushing teeth and handwashing dishes until you're ready to rinse
2. Take shorter showers (recommended 3-5 minutes)
3. Do full laundry and dish loads (scrape plates rather than rinsing them)
4. Check for leaks, drips, running toilets and repair them
5. Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator rather than running water until it is cold

EXTRA CREDIT (for the brave):

1. Toilets: If it's yellow let it mellow, if it's brown, flush it down
2. Reuse gray water collected from your kitchen sink for watering plants

VEC IN FOCUS: Member Sean DiBartolo



Sean and his family moved to Verona in 2015. A licensed, practicing Engineer (PE), Certified Floodplain Manager, and LEED AP, Sean has been specializing in geotechnical and civil engineering for over 23 years. So, when he showed up at a VEC meeting back in 2016, he seemed like a perfect fit to volunteer as a new member. He displayed a deep interest in Verona's future and well-being and immediately became a steward for our environmental concerns.

Sean is really *the* consummate volunteer. In fact, he's an actual Eagle Scout, and serves as a Cubmaster for Pack 31 and Assistant Scoutmaster for Verona Troop 2. You may see him helping his Pack hand out free popcorn at the Fair in the Square, or dropping some dinks on a pickleball court, or just out and about on a local excursion with his whole crew. Sean also volunteers as an election poll worker, so you may have also seen him at one of the polling locations throughout Verona on Election Day.

And if you've ever been to one of the VEC's clean-up events, you've undoubtedly see Sean, likely walking though the Peckman River collecting misplaced debris that found its way into our waterway and its banks.

Sean, the Vice Chair of the VEC since 2019, oversees the Plan Review Committee, a committee of three members who review plans to be heard before Verona's Zoning Board of Adjustment or the Planning Board. This may seem like a simple task, but Sean's background elevates these reviews to provide both Boards with added insight to enhance their understanding of the applications and their impacts. Verona has experienced an extensive increase in flood events and so applications that entail impervious surface increases and or unmitigated tree removals must be met with a higher degree of foresight, better stormwater planning, and mitigation tactics that were not given enough emphasis in the past. Sean was also instrumental in the drafting of Verona's enhanced Stormwater Ordinance.

Sean's wife and best friend Christy, an award-winning licensed Architect and LEED AP, also volunteers for our Township. She currently serves on Verona's Zoning Board of Adjustment, and is Past President of the local American Institute of Architects sections in conjunction with her self-owned architecture firm, and has coached her children for the VBSL in baseball and softball.

When they aren't working or volunteering, Sean, Christy, and their three children spend their time together. If they can get away on a vacation, it's usually in a camper and serves as an educational tour for the whole family. Even when they can't get away, Sean and Christy make their backyard the adventure; he installed a zipline and trampoline for the kids and loves making fires in their fire ring which becomes the yard's focal point when toasting up s'mores.

Sean is an optimistic experimentalist. Take for instance, the time he tapped his maple trees and made his own [maple syrup](#). He sees no real boundaries to what we can attempt and achieve. It's exactly this sort of curiosity, resourcefulness, and initiative that makes Sean an amazing colleague, volunteer, and an asset to our Commission.



The VEC thanks Sean and all of the volunteers that give their precious time to the VEC and to Verona.

VEC NEWS

- **Earth Day Poster Contest Awards**

The Winning Posters were created by:

Erin Fricke (FN Brown);

Jaden Zhang (Laning);

Leo LaRosa (Forest) and

Hunter Gruchacz (Brookdale)

Honorable mention:

Katherine Evans and Michael Passero (FN Brown)

VIEW the [2024 VEC POSTER CONTEST VIDEO](#)

- **National Trails Day Cleanup progress**

The VEC is restoring the sign kiosk behind FN Brown at the Peckman River Trail head. The kiosk, originally constructed as an Eagle Scout project, was vandalized and unfortunately the signage was ruined.

The plans include re-staining the wood frame, providing new signage/maps and historic information and installing a new lock and plexiglass. This is a work in progress and our hope is to finish the installation by the end of 2024.

- Visit our [new website page](#) and learn where to donate multiple bulk and unwanted items!
- VIEW our latest Webinar: [RECYCLING 101](#)



Earth Day Assemblies

Each year, the VEC provides educational assemblies on recycling and no-idling for Verona's elementary schools.

Sarah O'Farrell, (above) an educator for over 30 years presents a fun and informative program using samples of the items we can and cannot recycle here in Verona. Wearing her favorite lobster cap, Sarah nimbly dashes around the auditorium toting a microphone, posing questions to the students, seeking their advice on how to dispose of items from her 'bag of tricks'. Besides providing valuable information, it's a truly fun and entertaining time for the kids!



SUMMER BIRDING

Do you want to learn more about birds?
This is the BEST site to get started birding in your own backyard: Explore at [eBird.Org](#)



THE VEC holds multiple events throughout each year and welcomes resident and organization support and partnerships. To find out more about us, please follow us on [FB](#) and [Instagram](#), visit our [website](#) or contact us at VEC@VeronaNJ.org.

