

Keeping the **bigger water picture** in mind everyday

ONLY 1% OF THE WORLD'S WATER is available for human consumption, and our demand for that water continues to increase steadily. The world's population is growing by approximately 80 million people per year, which implies increased fresh water demand of an amazing 64 billion cubic meters annually.

Taken from our white paper, "Water Conservation and the Green Industry," those statistics are part of the "big picture," and they may be best described as overwhelming. When speaking in terms of billions and millions, it's difficult to see how the actions of each of us as individuals can possibly have a positive impact on the world's water situation. However, our seemingly mundane choices do play a role in the global water crisis we face today. In other words, we have to keep the big picture in mind while focusing on the smaller picture framed by our everyday lives.

While everyone can try to limit their own personal water use, landscape and irrigation contractors are in a particularly unique position to create a wider swath of positive change. But, first, they must make the decision to commit to that positive change. Manufacturers and other Green Industry suppliers are developing more efficient products that leave smaller environmental footprints, but it's up to contractors to take advantage of these products and encourage their customers to do the same.

The first step is for contractors to become

knowledgeable about the many elements of a sustainable landscape. Recommending and planting more drought-resistant trees, plants and turf is one example. Understanding when it's right to irrigate with non-potable water is another. And, of course, learning about the latest water-efficient irrigation system components and design practices is a must.

The newest smart controllers can ensure that landscapes are only getting as much water as they need. When used appropriately, drip and subsurface irrigation can use up to 70% less water than above-ground sprays. Rain/freeze sensors and soil moisture sensors can add affordable smart control in just about any application. At commercial sites, central controls can simplify irrigation scheduling and make users quickly aware of any system performance issues.

It's certainly important for contractors to have a solid understanding of water-efficient products and system design principles, but successful contractors will more and more be those who are able to educate their customers on both the need for and best practices of water-efficient landscaping. By being up-to-date on local water-efficient product rebates and watering restrictions, contractors can make the decision to use water intelligently an easy one for their customers.

