

How Much to Water Your Lawn

Garden-Tip TB1111

Gardening Tips for successful and beautiful Landscapes and Gardens

This question is the most asked in Nurseries today. Without adequate questioning of the customers soil condition, type of emitters and plant variety, any answer provided has little chance of being correct. This Star Note discusses "Lawns" only, NOT Trees & Shrubs.

Lawn watering is covered by various *Watering Guides* or *Drought Watering Restrictions Guide* published by the appropriate Water Authority in your area. Check with local City or County regulations in order to be in compliance with those rules. Always consult the current Guide for regulations. These rules are established for the conservation of water and may omit important information regarding plant health. **For instance; Do not water between 6 pm and 3 am!** Avoid watering that would leave your lawn too moist or wet in the evening or dark. This creates very favorable conditions for fungus infection.

The Drought Watering Restrictions determine which or how many days you can water your lawn not how many times per day or quantity of water used. The amount of water needed by a turf grass will vary greatly based on the type of soil composition and seed type. Water use regulations generally do not even discuss these issues. They also do not discuss the consequences of over-watering, night watering, or how to deal with fungus or other diseases. To water more often than these regulations allow can bring severe fines, as well as cause damage and possible disease.

Watering 3 times for 4 minutes each watering day is the standard recommendation for lawns. As the seasons change the "days-per-week" change. However, your lawn may need more or less watering minutes or a different frequency depending on individual conditions, such as shade and sun exposure, type of soil, type of grass, etc. See specific lawn factors below:

Consider these factors. High wind, rain, temperature, condition of the sprinkler system and the kind of soil.

Properly fertilize and mow to an adequate height, **not too short**. Your lawn will use less water when grown to the optimum height. Be sure your sprinkler system is properly tuned. In summer, water between the hours of 4 and 7 AM when temperatures are cooler. In winter a 9 AM start time will prevent ice on your lawn or driveway. Don't water in the rain! Don't water at night!

Frequency of Watering vs. Quantity of Water. Know the difference. Days per week represents "frequency", while "minutes of run time" represents quantity. Change your frequency of watering throughout the seasons, and attempt to leave the minutes unchanged.

Soil type. Clay, sand and loam all have different water holding capacities and drainage rates. Most of the landscapes in the San Diego area are very slow to drain, but not all! Know the characteristic of your soil for your lawn. Use a moisture meter to determine how long the soil remains wet 2 inches deep following an irrigation. Clay type soils will saturate quicker (run-off) and hold moisture longer (less minutes – two times). Sandy soils will not saturate yet will often dry out more quickly (six minutes – three times). A good Loamy soil does not saturate easily and will hold water better (four minutes three times). You can improve the drainage of your soil by regularly aerating and then applying 1/16" fine sand to it following the aeration. Treating the soil for high pH with sulfur or Gypsum will also improve porosity.

Location/Slope. If you have different water requirements for different areas of your lawn; Slope, Sun or Shade, you may need to provide different hydro-zones (multiple valves) in order to have a healthy lawn. Check with our Certified Advisors to see what your requirements are.

Different Seasons. Your lawn needs water less often in the winter months. Most often in the summer. Try to leave the quantity of water, or minutes you water, nearly constant throughout the year. This helps to keep salts build-up to a minimum, and helps to develop deeper roots. When using rotary heads, run 3 to 5 times longer to provide the same amount of water to all grass areas.

Without adequate questioning of the customers soil condition, type of emitters or bubblers, plant variety, season, and micro-climate, any answer provided has little chance of being correct. There is an ALTERNATIVE!

Drought & Smart Clocks. We can all make a difference and conserve water by managing our irrigation systems more efficiently. Mandatory watering restrictions are determined by season and drought stages. Take the guess work out of watering correctly and convert your system to the use of a "Smart Clock".

ET (Evaporation – Transpiration) INTELLIGENT CONTROL IRRIGATION SYSTEMS SMART CLOCKS

If you read the two sections Watering Tips, 'Lawn' and 'Shrubs/Trees', the potential complexity of keeping your irrigation system set properly may have you a bit concerned. By upgrading your irrigation controller to a Smart Clock, this complexity is dealt with only once. All of the various factors are initially taken into consideration for your landscape when your system is set up. After set up, when the water requirements change due to climate, your system settings adjust accordingly. It is reliably and automatic. You will no longer need to remember to change your settings, or wonder what to change them to. They will automatically adjust for the changes in temperature or climate. If you prefer to set your system up yourself, there are adequate instructions, and we will help you to understand them. However, because set-up is only done once, you can choose to let a professionally trained technician do this.