

Instructions on How to Grow Great Grass While Conserving Water

Investing about an hour of your time on how you are watering your lawn can result in three great benefits: 1) great grass, 2) using less water, and 3) saving money on your water bill! (These guidelines are adapted from the Consumer Reports article “Growing Great Grass”.)

During mild weather, healthy, mature lawn only needs watering once a week – timed long enough for 1 inch of water application over the entire lawn. So how do you get your lawn healthy and mature? Here’s how:

- Mow high and regularly – keeping your grass between 2 ½ - 3 ½ inches high promotes healthy roots that are able to penetrate deeper into the soil. *Benefits: greater access to water, less evaporation, fewer weeds, and fewer pests.*
- Mulch – periodically leave clippings when you mow. This returns nutrients to the soil, reducing the need for fertilizing.
- Water early – early morning watering is best. Watering at night promotes fungus and mold growth, while watering in the day leads to water loss from evaporation and wind.
- Watering frequency – Water needs to soak at least 1 inch below your lawn’s roots.

To help determine how long you need to water to achieve this, you’ll need to determine how quickly your soil absorbs water and the amount of water your sprinkler heads put out:

1. Set empty containers (with a flat-bottom contour, rather than rounded) around all areas of your lawn.
 2. Run your sprinklers for 15 minutes.
 3. Take this opportunity to adjust your sprinkler heads so they only water the lawn area, and not the surrounding pavement.
 4. Use a ruler to measure the depth of water in each container. If your sprinklers apply approximately a ½ inch of water in 15 minutes, you’ll need to water 30 minutes to apply 1 inch of water to your lawn. (You may need to adjust sprinkler heads to help even out water application.)
 5. If water is running off the lawn, the sprinklers are putting out more water than the soil can absorb. So you will need to water in multiple, shorter intervals. Turn off sprinklers at the point of water run off. Allow water to soak in for ½ hour, than continue watering. Repeat until an inch of water has been applied to the lawn.
- Fertilizing frequency – generally 3 times per year is sufficient. Remember to sweep fertilizer that has fallen on the pavement back onto the lawn to help reduce fertilizer in runoff.

Adjust your watering frequency depending upon temperature/weather – Invest in a rain sensor so your sprinkler system takes care of turning off the water if it is raining.

How to test if your lawn needs to be watered:

Step on your lawn. If you leave a footprint when you walk (blades of grass don’t spring back up), the lawn needs watering.