

Watering Wisely Saves Money



Many startling facts have led water districts to concentrate on outdoor water usage when it comes to water conservation programs. Recent studies show that most home gardeners routinely overwater their lawns, giving them twice as much water as the lawn actually needs.



Automatic pop-up systems are the best way to water lawns.

Lawn watering consumes nearly half of the water used by most homes during the warmest months of the year. Many of us water too often and too long. Most lawns need to be watered no more than three days a week in the spring, four days a week in the summer and two days a week in the fall to remain healthy and green. Besides wasting water, overwatering encourages disease. However, an underwatered lawn is both unhealthy and unattractive.

Lawn Watering Conservation Ideas

Contra Costa County has a very arid climate. At times, water can be scarce and the supply unpredictable. There are various alternatives to lawns, such as ground covers, low growing shrubs, or hardscaping. If a lawn is a necessary component of your landscape, consider these tips:

- Minimize or reduce lawn areas.
- Consider replacing established or unhealthy lawn areas with more water, conserving varieties.
- Install a sprinkler system to deliver water uniformly.
- Use automatic timers on manual set-ups.
- Follow our lawn care tips (*on the backside of this page*).

Lawn Watering Practices

Deep Watering

Deep watering encourages grass roots to grow deeper into the soil. Deep roots mean the lawn will be less affected by surface drying. (*Refer to the insert on Watering.*)

Water Absorption

Many sprinklers will apply water faster than the soil can absorb. Remember, the ground is like a sponge. To make sure it can absorb all the water your lawn needs, divide your watering time into two or three periods. (*Follow the guidelines from CCWD's Irrigation Efficiency Audit.*)

Lawn Sprinkler Layout

Sprinklers for lawn areas should be spaced so that water from each sprinkler head reaches the next sprinkler head. This is called head-to-head coverage. The goal is to apply water evenly, avoiding runoff and overspray.

quick tips...

THE WATERWISE LANDSCAPE

- Watering deeply will encourage deep, healthy roots
- Avoid overwatering and run off by watering in 2-3 cycles.
- Check and adjust sprinkler heads seasonally.
- Water early in the day to avoid excess evaporation.

Timing

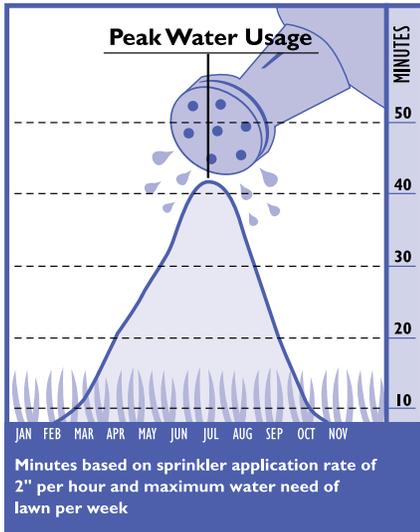
Set your sprinklers to come on in the early morning hours (before dawn) to give water time to soak in before it evaporates by the heat of the sun.

Measure Soil Moisture

You've watered the lawn, but how wet is it? A moisture sensor or a soil probe will show you how deeply water is penetrating the earth. Moisture sensors are merely a gauge that measures the soil's moisture content. Many units are portable and can be purchased at local home improvement stores or nurseries.

- A soil core will indicate when it's time to water again by revealing the depth of dry soil from the surface downward.
- Poke a screw driver or wire into the soil in several places. In areas that are moist, it will penetrate easily. In areas where soil is dry, it will be harder to penetrate the soil.

A Healthy Lawn Uses Less Water



How to Water Your Lawn

How long and how frequently you water your lawn depends on several factors; how fast your sprinklers apply water, your soil type, the health of your lawn, and the weather. (Refer to the insert on Watering.)

In cooler weather, stretch the interval between waterings, not the length of time you water. Remember, lawns need half as much water in spring and fall as they do during mid-summer.

Good Lawn Care

Caring For A New Lawn

In Contra Costa County, the water supply can be unpredictable at times. To ensure an attractive landscape in both dry and wet years choose the more drought tolerant grasses, such as Bermuda or Tall Fescue.

Soil preparation is the most important part of a new lawn. Before planting, test your soil (your local nursery or County Cooperative Extension office can tell you how) and adjust pH if necessary.

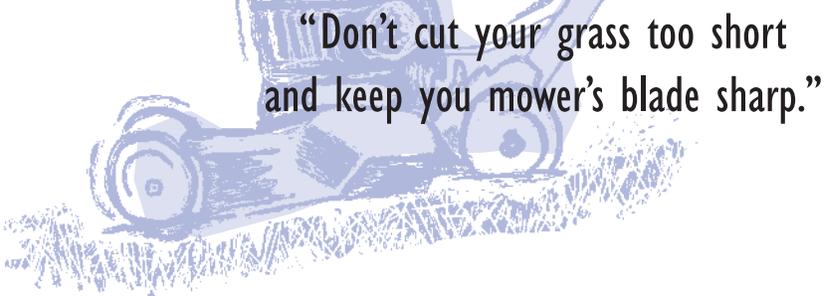
A well cared for lawn - properly mowed, watered, and fertilized - will resist pests and better withstand periods of drought.

Caring For An Established Lawn

To improve water penetration and reduce runoff, aerate and dethatch your lawn once a year.

Aeration

Aeration is the removal of cores or plugs of soil from the lawn. Aerating increases water and oxygen absorption to the root zone. This is particularly important for clay soils or sloping ground. You can rent power aerators or dethatchers at local rental yards.



Dethatching

Removes the buildup of dead stems and blades beneath the green surface of the lawn. Dethatching a lawn lets water and fertilizer reach the soil easier.

quick tips...

LAWN CARE CHECKLIST

- Adjust your watering schedule to reflect the seasons. Water less in the spring and fall.
- Aerate and dethatch your lawn to aid water, air, and fertilizer penetration.
- Plant or replace unhealthy lawns with drought tolerant varieties.
- Always water efficiently regardless of the season.