



Irrigation for a Healthy Lawn

Drought-resistant lawns



People who turn on their sprinklers for a short while each day are keeping only the top few inches of soil wet. Their plants develop shallow roots to use this water at the soil surface. But what happens when water is not available for a few days?

Water deeply and infrequently

A much better strategy is to water deeply and infrequently. This forces plants to develop their roots downward, forming an expansive deepreaching root ball. This makes for a healthy drought-resistant lawn.

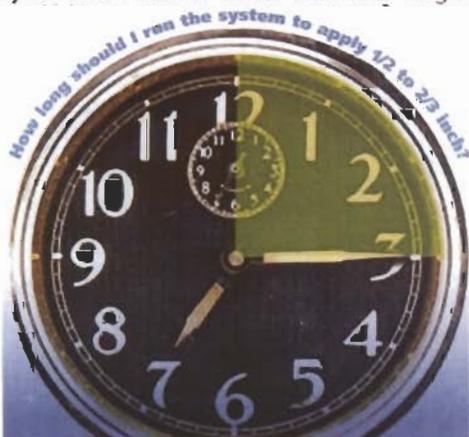
How often is "infrequently"?

Volusia County's current 2-day a week watering restrictions fit well with University of Florida Extension recommendations. If watering is done to the correct depth, two days a week should be adequate except during the period of establishment when plants need more frequent water. In winter when plant growth slows or stops, watering every week or two weeks is enough.

How deep is "deeply"?

Water enough to wet 18 inches of soil (the full root zone for turfgrass).

To wet 18 inches of soil, with the sandy soils of our area, apply 1/2 to 2/3 inch of water with each irrigation.



To know how long to run your particular sprinkler system to apply that amount, calibrate your sprinkler system by the tuna can calibration

Tuna can calibration

Do the following for each zone. Place shallow cans or straight-sided glasses around at different distances from your sprinklers. Note the time and turn on the sprinklers for 15 minutes. Turn off the sprinklers and check the cans.



Measure the depth of water.

If it is already 1/2 to 2/3 inch, then your run time is 15 minutes. If the level of water in the cans is less, note the time and start the process again adding to the time until you get the required amount of water in the cans. Note any cans that are getting less water than the rest, and look for problems with the sprinklers in that area. Check for leaks as part of this process. Replace leaky spray heads.

Other lawn health tips

Fertilization matters

Fertilize your lawn only twice a year, in fall and spring. Overfertilizing causes plants to need more water. Consult U.F. Cooperative Extension for further information.

Mowing

Keep your mower blades sharp to avoid leaving jagged leaf blades, that make grass plants susceptible to disease. Set your mower to the highest setting. Longer leaf blades allow deeper roots.

Install your rain sensor device

Overwatering by watering in the rain causes disease problems and growth of dollarweed and other weeds.

