

Trying to maintain a lawn at the peak of perfection at all times, especially during the summer, is not only a waste of water, but it is bad for the grass and adds to pest problems. Through efficient use, water consumption can be reduced by up to 50 percent with only a 10 percent reduction in turf quality. This change is hardly noticeable and leads to positive effects such as less frequent mowing and fewer weeds, diseases, and insects.

Water conservation goals for a lawn might be to maintain attractive, healthy turf with less water, eliminate irrigation runoff and avoid soaking soil below the root zone, to water when evaporation loss from heat and wind is low, and plant water-conserving grasses. Factors that affect lawn watering include:

- Grass type — warm- or cool-season
- Weather — temperature, humidity, sun, rain, wind
- Soil type — sand, clay, loam, or compacted soil
- Sunny or shady location
- Seasons — shorter days and cooler temperatures during the spring and fall vs. longer days and hotter temperatures during the summer
- Amount of fertilizer applied
- Mowing height
- Slope of the yard

Follow these practices to conserve water.

- Water only when lawn shows signs of needing water.
- Water in the morning.
- Water slowly so all water is absorbed, no runoff.
- Direct the water only onto the turf.
- Use sprinklers that produce drops of water.
- Soak soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches.
- Stop watering at least 30 minutes before sundown.
- Start water-conservation practices at the beginning of the season.
- Water as infrequently as possible without stressing grass.
- Avoid shallow, frequent watering and watering paved walks, drives, and streets.
- Do not water with a fine mist spray or in high winds.
- Do not mow grass short or fertilize excessively.

How Often to Water

Water more or less often depending on the weather, turfgrass species, soil type, season, shade, fertilization practices, mowing height, and slope. Weather changes by season and varies considerably from year to year. *Adjust watering frequency to the weather and not the calendar.*

Water according to the weather

Water less	Water more
Cooler temperatures	High temperatures
Cloudy or overcast	Bright sunlight
Low wind	High wind
High humidity	Low humidity
Rain or showers	No rain

Use the soak and wait method. Soak soil to the depth of the root zone, and wait as long as possible before watering again. Watch for signs that the turf needs water such as a darker bluish-green color or footprints remaining in the turf. Do not wait until turf is severely wilted. Sandy soils have to be watered more often than loam or clay soils.

Watering too frequently and lightly is a common mistake.

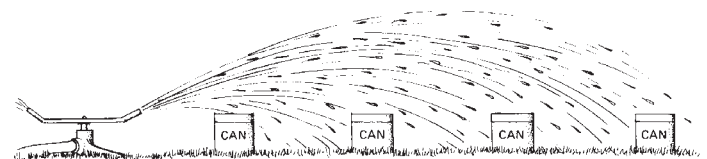
Frequent, shallow watering produces a shallow root system and reduces resistance to heat, cold, drought, and wear. Water as infrequently as possible without stressing the turf. Lawns differ in soil characteristics and species, so there is no simple formula. The following guidelines should be adjusted for the site.

Frequency of irrigation

Buffalograss	Least frequent
Bermudagrass	
Tall fescue	
Zoysiagrass	
Kentucky bluegrass	
Perennial ryegrass	Most frequent

How Much to Water

The amount of water to apply at one time depends largely on the soil. The type of soil determines how much water is absorbed and held in addition to the potential rooting depth of the grass. Apply enough water to soak soil slightly below the root depth. You can determine this by excavating a small portion of the soil profile with a shovel. Most roots grow 6 to 8 inches deep in a loam soil, deeper in sandy soil, and shallower in a clay soil. Roots will not grow as deeply in compacted soils because of a lack of oxygen.



This measures the rate of application and distribution uniformity.