



Proper Lawn Irrigation

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General lawn irrigation recommendations

- As a generalization, turfgrass requires approximately 1 inch of water per week to survive. However, this requirement can be significantly increased or decreased based on the environmental conditions, soil characteristics, turfgrass species, and desires of the owner.
- If natural rainfall fails to provide adequate moisture for a several week period, irrigation can be supplemented to reach this generalized 1 inch requirement. Irrigation should be supplemented on one or two occasions per week for longer periods of time (i.e. deep and infrequent) as opposed to a short period of time several times per week (ie shallow and frequent). Deep and infrequent watering will promote deeper rooting and healthier turf more resistant to drought.
- The duration of irrigation will depend on the irrigation system and output, but times of 20-25 minutes can generally provide a ½ inch of water with most in-ground or hose-based sprinklers. Irrigate during the early morning hours to prevent disease development and to limit water loss to evaporation.

Ways to limit water usage

- Keep the turf healthy! Healthy plants that are mowed at the proper height and receive the proper amount of fertilization will naturally have deeper roots and be more resistant to drought.
- Allow the lawn to go dormant! Healthy Kentucky bluegrass can go dormant during drought conditions for 4-6 weeks and still recover once rainfall returns. If you have Kentucky bluegrass and don't mind brown turf, there is no need to irrigate in most summers!
- Plant drought-resistant turfgrass species such as Tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*) and fine-leaf fescues (*Festuca* spp). Please note, however, that these species do not survive long periods of dormancy the way Kentucky bluegrass does and that once they turn brown they oftentimes do not survive.

For more detailed information on lawn irrigation, please see the UW Extension publication titled 'Watering Your Lawn' (A3950) by Dr. Doug Soldat and Dr. John Stier.

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