

How Much Water Does My Yard Really Need?

Water deeply and infrequently... Water for shorter amounts of time... Water 1" a week...

What does all that mean?

First You need to Know Your Yard:

1. Know the Areas Covered by each sprinkler zone/station.
2. Know Shaded versus Sunny Areas.
3. Know Your Soil.
4. Know Your Sprinkler Heads

Know the Areas Covered -- For automatic sprinkler systems, run each zone/station to determine exactly what area is covered by each station. Know flower bed zones versus grass zones. Grass roots grow to an average depth of 4", bed plants can vary from 6" to 12" or more. Different root growth means water needs to sink to different depths. Shallow roots (grass) needs less watering time. Deeper roots need more watering time, but the water needs to be absorbed - that means giving flower beds 2 "drinks" with time to absorb the water in between the waterings.

Know Shady vs. Sunny Areas - Areas in full sun will dry out faster than shady areas. Shady areas will need less water than sunnier areas. Coordinate the time per zone to the amount of sun each zone gets. Sunny areas need more water, but the water needs to be absorbed - that may mean giving sunny areas 2 "drinks" with time to absorb the water in between the waterings.

Know Your Soil -- Most of the soil in our area is clay based, even if your yard has amended soil it probably is still slow to drain. Ground that retains water longer needs less frequent water.

Know Your Sprinkler Heads - There are 3 basic types of sprinkler heads:

Rotors - spray and sweep when they water - these heads apply water in bigger drops and slowly - they typically need 20 to 30 minutes per cycle.

Pop-ups - spray a designated arc pattern but don't move - these heads apply smaller drops of water in a faster amount of time - they typically need 6 to 10 minutes per cycle.

Drip - a hose either above ground or below ground that slowly drips water directly into the ground - they typically need 20 to 30 minutes per cycle.

Second You need to understand some basic watering concepts:

- **Run-Off** - You have probably seen it, it's the point in the watering cycle when the ground gets full and can absorb no more water - the excess water runs off. This point varies per the above "Know" conditions.
- **Cycle & Soak** - Knowing and respecting the absorption rate of your yard is key. Run a watering "cycle" just long enough (prior to run-off) to saturate the ground. The next part "soak", is the amount of time you need to let your yard absorb the applied water, allow anywhere from 2 - 6 hours before the next water cycle.

Understanding where, when, and how much water we use is the important in beginning to conserve one of our most precious resources. Twice a week during spring weather should be a sufficient number of waterings using the times and conditions stated above.

Still unsure? You can carry out an audit of your system for exact water application rates of your system or contact a Certified Irrigation Auditor or Licensed Irrigator to help.