

Texas Lawn Watering Guide

Did you know?

Landscape irrigation can account for more than 50 percent of all the water used in Texas during the summer. Unfortunately, about half of this water is wasted due to over-watering or runoff.

Soil type, landscape slope, water requirements of the turfgrass type, and sprinkler efficiency all affect how often you need to water.

Turfgrass generally requires more frequent watering than water-wise plants. That is why it is important to use turfgrass sparingly and in functional areas that can be efficiently watered.

Soil Type

Lawns grown in sandy soil require shorter, more frequent watering than lawns in loam or clay soils. Water can be applied less often to clay and loam soils, but it should be applied more slowly to prevent runoff. Soils can be improved by topdressing the lawn with about one-half inch of compost per year. If you are establishing a new lawn, consider blending topsoil with about 25 percent compost. Soil testing offered through your local County Agricultural Extension Service will enable you to determine the best product for your lawn.

Slope

To avoid runoff on sloping areas, "cycle-soak." Apply water slowly for 5 to 15 minutes, off 15 minutes, then on 5 to 15 minutes, etc. until you have applied the correct amount of water. Groundcovers work well in areas that are sloping, narrow, small, odd-shaped, or close to pavement. These areas are hard to water without runoff and overspray.

Trees, Shrubs, & Groundcover

Established plantings do well in the summer when watered about once a week, especially if mulch is placed around plants. Mulch reduces evaporation of water from the soil and moderates soil temperatures. Low output sprinkler heads, bubblers, or drip irrigation systems will decrease runoff and are efficient ways to apply water. New plantings may require more frequent watering to help with establishment. Grass and weed removal from beneath trees and shrubs allows their roots to be more evenly distributed, increase in number, and utilize a larger volume of soil. Consider Texas-Grown, water-wise varieties when purchasing new or replacement plants.

When?

Turfgrass takes on a dull, dark appearance and leaves begin to roll when they need water. The best time to water is early morning or late evening when winds are calmer and temperatures are lower,

resulting in less water loss to evaporation. Water lines tend to have better pressure during these times.

How Much?

Apply enough water to wet the soil to a depth of four to six inches, reaching the plant's root system. Use a soil probe or screwdriver to determine the depth the water actually reaches. Soil type, amount of rainfall, and season of the year all affect the amount of water you will need to apply. Healthy, properly irrigated turf rarely requires more than one inch of water per week during the summer months. Unless there is an extended dry spell, there is rarely a need to irrigate during the winter when the plants are dormant.

Application Strategy

Use a sprinkler that emits large drops of water that remain close to the ground, rather than one that sprays a fine mist into the air. Water deeply and infrequently to encourage deep, well established root systems. Water trees, shrubs, and other landscape plants separately from turf.

Determine Application Amount

1. Determine how much water your sprinkler applies:
 - A. Set three to five empty cans at different distances from the sprinkler with the last can near the edge of the sprinkler coverage.
 - B. Run the sprinkler for 15 minutes.
 - C. Measure the amount of water collected in each can in inches.
 - D. Add together the measurements from each can and divide the total by the number of cans to obtain an average.
 - E. Multiply the average by 4 to determine how many inches of water are applied in 1 hour.
2. One inch of water every five days or longer is sufficient for most common grasses during the summer. Buffalo grass needs less water. Don't forget to account for rainfall.
3. This test will also locate uneven distribution of the sprinkler system and define wet and dry spots.

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| Avg Depth in Containers | 1/4" | 3/8" | 1/2" | 5/8" | 3/4" |
| Run-time (min.) | 60 | 40 | 30 | 24 | 20 |

For more information, contact your County Agricultural Extension Agent, local waterwise landscape professional, or the Texas WaterWise Council (www.waterwisetexas.org).

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www.twdb.state.tx.us

