

# RESIDENTIAL LAWN WATERING GUIDE

for  
**Salt Lake County**

## DO YOU KNOW YOU COULD USE LESS WATER AND HAVE A HEALTHIER LAWN?

Most of us use drinking water to grow our lawns, flowers and other plants. On average, we use nearly two-thirds of our water out doors, most of which goes on lawns. As much as one-half of the water is wasted through incorrect watering.

If you can answer these questions, you are probably watering correctly.

1. Do you know how much water you apply each time you irrigate your lawn?
2. Are you applying the water to your lawn evenly?
3. Do you know when your lawn needs water?

If you cannot answer these questions, the following three simple steps will help you find the answers and put you on the path to correctly irrigate your lawn.

**STEP 1. Check Distribution Uniformity (Pattern) of Your Sprinklers.** Remember, not all sprinklers apply the same amount of water. This is true of automatic, manual, or hose systems.

To check the distribution pattern, you will need at least 4 containers. Straight-sided containers like soup cans or milk cartons are fine but shallow tuna cans are too shallow and water splashes out. You may also use special water measuring cups (available from local Utah State University Extension Offices).

**A)** Place the 4 or more containers in a grid pattern over the lawn area to be checked.

**B)** Run your sprinklers for a period of time (at least 10 minutes) over the lawn. If you have over-lapping sprinklers that run at different times, run both sets of sprinklers. Check each container and see if the amount of water in each is about the same. Make a note of those containers (areas) that have more or less water than average. Try the following suggestions to apply water more evenly:

- Set the sprinklers to run for longer or shorter periods of time if they are on different valves.
- Check and repair clogged, damaged, or broken sprinkler heads. Also look for sprinklers that may be set into the ground too deeply or tilted. Sprinklers should be vertical and should not be obstructed by surrounding grass, plants, or other objects.
- Sprinklers running on the same line or valve should be the same model and have the right nozzle to cover the desired area.

**C)** After making adjustments, empty the containers and try the test again. Continue to make adjustments and run the test until the system is applying water as evenly as possible.



Suitable test containers could include special water measuring cups, open-topped milk cartons, or soup cans.



Checking contents of container.

**STEP 2. Determine how long you should run your sprinklers to apply the right amount of water.**

Most areas of Utah have average high temperatures of 90° - 100° F. The suggested irrigation application is ½ inch of water each irrigation.

**A)** In your 4 containers, measure and mark a ½ inch depth. Note that the ½ inch line on the special water measuring cups is just above the measured markings on the side.

**B)** Turn on your sprinklers and time how long it takes for water to reach the marks in each container. With overlapping set of sprinklers, split the run time equally between both sets of sprinklers. Figure the average run time for all containers.

**C)** If you see water running off your lawn, three or more soak cycles are recommended. Irrigate for three or more cycles allowing 1-hour in between each cycle. This will prevent water from running off the lawn.

**Example:** If your sprinklers take 21 minutes to apply ½ inch of water, you would use three 7-minute cycles. Run your sprinklers for 7 minutes each cycle and wait one hour in between each cycle.

**STEP 3. Set Your Watering Schedule**

Now that you know **how long** to water each time you irrigate, you need to know **how often** to irrigate. The irrigation schedule shows how often to irrigate during the growing season.

This schedule is based upon average or normal weather conditions. Unusual warm conditions may require an occasional irrigation a day earlier than scheduled. Rain storms or cool periods may allow postponing or skipping an irrigation.

By following the above suggestions, you will apply the **maximum** amount of water required by the lawn. You will also use about half of the water the average Utah homeowner uses. This schedule could save you as much as **one-fourth** of your yearly water usage. Even so, you may still be using more than is necessary.

To use less water, you will need to make your sprinkler system more efficient or reduce the total number of irrigations you apply during the growing season. **Each unnecessary irrigation that can be eliminated will save enough water for about 104 showers, 52 baths, 52 loads of laundry, or 312 toilet flushes.**

Irrigation Schedule	
Month	Interval
Startup to April 30	Once every 6 days
May	Once every 4 days
June	Once every 3 days
July	Once every 3 days
August	Once every 3 days
September	Once every 6 days
October 1 to Shutdown	Once every 10 days

**Every minute counts!**

For additional tips on how to irrigate more efficiently, contact you water supplier, local Utah State University Extension Horticulture Specialist, or one of the following organizations:

- Center for Water Efficient Landscaping**  
[www.hort.usu.edu/CWEL](http://www.hort.usu.edu/CWEL)
- Central Utah Water Conservancy District**
- Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District**
- Salt Lake City Public Utilities**
- Sandy City Public Utilities**, 801-568-6048
- US Bureau of Reclamation**, 801-379-1000  
[www.uc.usbr.gov/progact/waterconsrv/index.html](http://www.uc.usbr.gov/progact/waterconsrv/index.html)
- Utah Div. of Water Resources**, 801-538-7260  
<http://conservewater.utah.gov>.
- Utah Irrigation Association**  
<http://www.utahia.org>

- Utah Nursery & Landscape Association**  
<http://www.utahgreen.org>, 801-484-4426
- Utah State University Extension**  
<http://ext.usu.edu>
- Utah Water Conservation Forum**  
<http://www.utahwaterforum.org>
- Washington County Water Conservancy District**, 435-673-3617
- Weber Basin Water Conservancy District**  
<http://www.weberbasin.com>, 801-771-1677