



Drought: Irrigation Tips

Water is an essential resource for all aspects of life. With California's shortage of rain and snow this year, conserving our limited water supply is critical. Follow these simple recommendations for conserving water in your home landscape.

Adjust Irrigation

Irrigation controllers are commonly used to set start times, frequency and duration of a home's sprinkler or drip system. Over irrigation is very common, most home landscapes irrigation times and frequencies can be reduced by 20 to 40 percent with little to no effects on landscaping.

Irrigation Adjustment Tips:

- Gradually reduce water use by 10 percent increments over the course of a few weeks - giving lawns, trees and plants time to adjust
- Find your irrigation controller manual online
- Install a "Smart" irrigation controller which automatically adjusts using current weather data, historical weather patterns and/or soil moisture sensor
- Check for and repair leaks
- Adjust sprinkler heads to maximize coverage, avoid watering sidewalks and patios
- Install a drip irrigation system, grouping plants with similar water needs together on one drip irrigation line

Irrigation Scheduling Worksheet:

Calculate lawn and landscaping needs using the Irrigation Scheduling Worksheet from the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources and UC Davis. This worksheet will generate an annual calendar to irrigate a single hydrozone based on local historical evapotranspiration (ET), distribution uniformity (DU) assessment information, soil type, and desired soil wetting depth. The worksheet will also accommodate irrigation that is restricted to specific days of the week (designated irrigation days).

- [Landscape Irrigation System Evaluation and Management](#)



Lawn Watering

A lawn is almost always the single largest user of water in the home landscape, over irrigation is very common. Homeowner's should adjust lawn irrigation systems monthly in response to changes in temperature and weather. Calculate your turf's exact water needs using the three easy steps outlined below.

Water-saving Lawn Tips:

- Replace nonessential turf with ground covers, mulches, or decks and walkways
- Water at night, ideally between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. - helps reduce evaporation and wind interference with sprinkler patterns
- Mow lawn higher during very warm weather

3 Steps for Calculating Lawn Watering Needs:

1. What type of lawn do you have?
2. What is your sprinkler output?
3. How many minutes do you need to water your lawn?



Recycled Water

Using recycled water, or graywater, to irrigate landscape plants helps conserve water, electricity and reduces water bills. An estimated 30 to 50 percent of home water consumption results in graywater, which can be recycled into the landscape. Most homes can supply one-half to 3/4 of water-efficient landscape needs using graywater.

Recycled Graywater Sources:

- Residential washing machines
- Bathtubs
- Showers
- Sinks

NOT Graywater Sources:

- Kitchen sink
- Dishwasher
- Toilets

Because of health risks recycled water and/or graywater is not approved or recommended for use on edible plants. Graywater should only be used on non-edible, ornamental landscapes.

Resources

[California Institute for Water Resources](#)

[Keeping Landscape Plantings Alive under Drought or Water Restrictions](#)

[Questions & Answers About Water Conservation and Drought in the Landscape](#)

[UCCE Irrigation Scheduling Worksheet](#)