

**saving water**

# **OUTDOORS**

**Think <sup>2</sup>Two**

Remember the rule. Water lawns no more than two days a week.



# RESOURCES

## **saving water resources**

Saving Florida's water resources is a vital responsibility that will take everyone's participation to be successful. Water conservation may seem unnecessary in a state surrounded by water, but not all of that water is available for drinking or irrigation.

Though Florida usually receives about 50 inches of rain each year, only about 13 inches of water seeps into the ground to replenish underground aquifers. Aquifers are where more than 90 percent of us in northeast and east-central Florida get our drinking water.

One of the most important ways to help meet our water supply needs for today and in the future is through conservation, which is the efficient and effective use of water.

More than half of residential water use occurs outdoors. Watering wisely outside the home promotes healthier lawns and landscapes, and conserves our precious water resources.

**Florida's Water**  
It's Worth Saving



**More than  
half of  
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# IRRIGATION

## saving water outdoors

### Irrigation schedules

Water your lawn only when it needs it. The amount of rainfall your area receives should dictate how often you water your lawn and how much water you apply. A hearty rain eliminates the need for watering for as long as two weeks. Overwatering your lawn results in shallow root systems, which means your lawn is less drought- and stress-tolerant. Overwatering also promotes weed growth, disease and fungus.

The St. Johns River Water Management District rule allows watering no more than two days a week, with a few exceptions. Less water will likely be needed in the fall and winter, or when it rains. Water users choose their own irrigation days unless their local government has adopted an ordinance specifying the days.

The most efficient way to irrigate your lawn is to irrigate when it shows signs

of stress from lack of water. Two ways to determine when you should water are:

#### Visual and physical inspection —

Signs of stress include the lawn turning a bluish-gray color, lingering tire tracks or footprints, and leaf blades folded in half lengthwise. The soil around the root zone may feel dry.

#### Measuring soil moisture —

Sophisticated soil moisture sensors will turn on your automatic irrigation system when water is needed. The more basic soil moisture sensors turn off your system when water is adequate. The sophisticated soil moisture sensor technology is currently available only in irrigation supply stores.

The District rule allows lawn and landscape irrigation no more than two days a week.



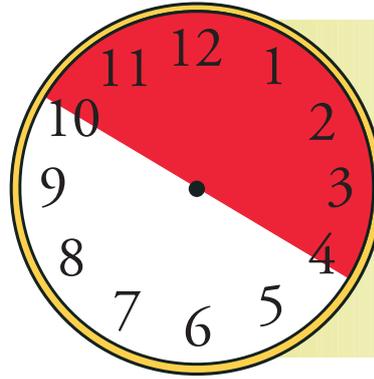
# IRRIGATION

## saving water outdoors

### Irrigation hours

Water lawns during the early morning or early evening hours when temperature and wind speed are lowest. This reduces losses from evaporation that can occur during the middle of the day. This also allows the water to seep into the ground to the grass and plant roots, promoting healthier plants with deep root systems. Watering early also reduces the potential for disease development.

The District rule allows watering only before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m., with a few exceptions.



*The District rule allows watering only before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.*



# IRRIGATION

## saving water outdoors

### Irrigation amounts

Apply moderate amounts of water to create a healthy, drought- and stress-tolerant lawn. For most Florida soils, applying no more than three-quarters of an inch of water per application is enough to replenish the grass. Saturate the root zone, then let soil dry to encourage healthy, deep root growth.

You can use the “can method” to determine how much water to apply and to see if you are watering uniformly across the landscaped area. Place five to seven wide-mouthed, flat-bottom cans (cans about the size of an average tuna can) throughout the area to be irrigated. Wait 30 minutes, and then measure the depth of water in each can. Average the measurements and use this number to determine how long you need to water to apply three-quarters of an inch of water.



# IRRIGATION

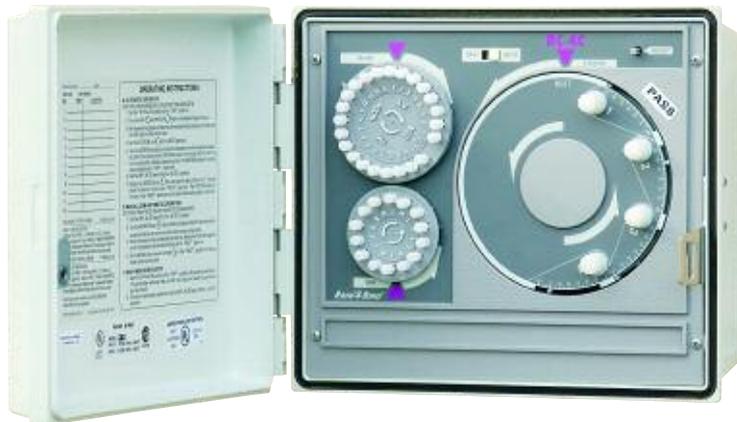
## saving water outdoors

### Irrigation methods

Irrigation can be done in two basic ways — with a hose and sprinkler or with an inground irrigation system.

When using a hose and sprinkler, place the sprinkler in the area that is driest. Allow the sprinkler to run the proper length of time to apply no more than three-quarters of an inch of water. When that area is complete, move the sprinkler to another dry area. Place the sprinkler so that its water spray will overlap the area previously watered. Position the sprinkler so that your water lands on the lawn and shrubs, not on paved areas.

Inground irrigation systems can be automatic or manual, or a combination. The automatic system is set for a predetermined time of day and days of the week. Make sure it is set for before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m., set for no more than two days a week, and only operates long enough to apply no more than three-quarters of an inch of water. Learn how to operate your system. Check timing devices regularly to make sure they are operating properly. Watch for broken or misdirected sprinklers. During extended periods of rainy weather, irrigation systems should be turned off.



# IRRIGATION

## saving water outdoors

Be sure your automatic sprinkler system is equipped with a working rain shutoff device, which overrides the system when enough rain has fallen. It automatically resets the system when the turf requires more water. Rain shutoff devices are required by Florida law on all automatic sprinkler systems installed since 1991. Check regularly to make sure the device is working properly and that the corresponding switch in the control box is set at "on."

Use the appropriate sprinkler head for the irrigated area. Install sprinklers that are the most water-efficient for each use. Rotors or spray heads are good for turf areas, but shouldn't be

used in the same zone. For even distribution, flow rates must be consistent throughout the zone. In planting beds, water-efficient methods of irrigation include soaker hoses, micro and drip irrigation, and spray heads designed for planting beds.



*Install sprinklers that are the most water-efficient for each use.*



## Lawn maintenance

### Fertilization

When fertilizing, using common sense can save water, reduce the amount of pollutants reaching waterways, and result in a healthier landscape.

Overfertilizing can aggravate pest problems, stimulate excessive plant growth, and demand frequent irrigation.

Fertilizer should be used when specific nutrient deficiency symptoms are evident.

Florida-friendly lawns may require only moderate amounts of supplemental fertilizer once they are established.

The amount of fertilizer to apply depends on a number of factors, such as grass species, soil type and permeability, and your location in the state.

Apply fertilizers sparingly, and follow the manufacturer's directions on the bag, particularly in terms of the amount per application.

Generally, use a 1:1 ratio of nitrogen to potassium (the first and last numbers on the bag). However, test for phosphorus to find out if your soil is already phosphorus-rich, as Florida soil is naturally high in phosphorus. Apply only if lacking. For

specifics to your area, contact the local County Cooperative Extension Service.

The best fertilizers for healthy landscapes and the environment are those that contain slow-release, water-insoluble forms of nitrogen. Water-insoluble products are not washed away like liquid or fast-release fertilizers. Slow-release products stay in the soil to supply nutrients to plants on a gradual basis, over a longer period of time. The product label will say organic, slow-release or controlled release, water-insoluble nitrogen, sulfur-coated, IBDU (15N-isobutylidene divrea), or resin-coated.

Fertilize only during the growing season, which can vary depending on where you live in Florida. Allow a month between autumn application and the first freezing temperatures, which will make new growth less vulnerable to frost.

Use pesticides only when needed and apply them responsibly, following the label's directions. Apply pesticides only on affected areas. Consider organic or nontoxic solutions.

## Lawn maintenance

### Mowing

Cut your grass at the highest recommended height for your turf species or the highest setting on your lawn mower. Cut no more than one-third of the grass length to encourage grass roots to grow deeper and grass blades to hold moisture.

Keep mower blades sharp for a clean cut; dull blades tear grass, opening it to disease. Leave short grass clippings where they fall. The clippings reduce the lawn's need for water and fertilizer. Remove thick patches of clippings so that the clippings will not kill the grass underneath.



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# LANDSCAPING

## waterwise landscaping

Plant drought-tolerant or Florida-friendly grasses, groundcovers, shrubs and trees. Once established, they do not need to be watered as frequently and they usually will survive a dry period with little or no watering.

To establish and maintain a healthy landscape that conserves water, consider using the following Xeriscape landscaping principles:

- **Get a soil analysis** — Collect soil samples from various areas of your yard and have them analyzed by your local County Cooperative Extension Service. This analysis will tell you the level of acidity or alkalinity in your soil. This information will help you decide which plants will work best in your yard.
- **Plan your landscape** — Evaluate the conditions in your yard, such as sunny and shady areas, how you will use sections of the yard and how large you want mature plants to be.
- **Choose the proper plants** — Determine each plant's need for sun, shade, soil and water, and its tolerance for cold or salt. Match the plant's needs to the appropriate spot in your landscape.



# LANDSCAPING

## waterwise landscaping

- **Use grass wisely** — Grass is often your yard's biggest water user. Save grass for areas where children or pets will play. In other areas, consider mulch or groundcover.
- **Irrigate effectively** — Group landscape plants that have similar moisture needs together in areas separate from grass. Use sprinklers that are the most water-efficient for each use. Zones of inground irrigation systems should be separate for turf and non-turf areas. Use appropriate matching spray heads throughout the zone.
- **Mulch** — Using mulch helps retain soil moisture and moderates temperature. Mulching also helps to control weeds that compete with plants for water. Spread several inches of mulch, such as wood chips, pine straw or leaves, around shrubs, trees and flowerbeds.
- **Maintain your yard** — Mow, weed, prune and irrigate as needed.

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# TIPS

## additional tips

Pay attention to your hose. Left unattended, a garden hose can pour out 600 gallons of water in an hour.

Check all hoses, connectors and spigots regularly to make sure they are in good working order.

Use a broom to clean leaves and other debris from sidewalks and driveways rather than a hose. Using a hose to clean a driveway can waste hundreds of gallons of water.

Outfit your hose with a spray nozzle that can be adjusted so water flows only as needed. When finished, turn it off at the faucet instead of at the nozzle to avoid leaks.

Use hose washers between spigots and water hoses to eliminate leaks.



**Florida's Water**  
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