

HOME WATER SELF-CHECK

DO-IT-YOURSELF WATER CHECK FOR THE HOME LANDSCAPE

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July 2003

HG-2003-02

In Utah, nearly two-thirds of the water consumed by residential homeowners is used to maintain landscapes. Recent water checks conducted by Utah State University Extension found that a typical homeowner applies 80 inches of water each growing season. This is twice as much as is needed. Nearly one-third of our water supply is wasted in over irrigation of our lawns.

The three leading factors of over irrigation include:

1. Irrigating more frequently than needed by the lawn.
2. Irrigations that run off slopes or below the root system.
3. Irrigation systems that are poorly designed, maintained, or inefficient.

When a dry spot shows up in your lawn what is the first thing you do? The correct water saving approach would be to water the spot by hand or correct the sprinkler system. Sadly, most homeowners turn up their sprinkler system to accommodate the dry spot. By watering to the needs of the dry spot the rest of the landscape is over watered. Only about 15 percent of homeowners in Utah know how much water their irrigation systems are applying. For the other 85 percent, a

recommendation to water deeper, less frequently and apply 1 inch of water every 3 days have little or no meaning. A non-mathematical, easy process to learn for yourself how much water you are supplying to your lawns:

1. Set out four containers in the yard. These containers can be any straight-sided container such as a soup or tuna can. Special cups with measurement lines can also be picked up at the County Extension Offices. Run the irrigation system for 10 to 20 minutes. Compare the



amount of water in the containers. If the catch cans all have about the same amount of water in them, the system is watering uniformly. If the cups show considerable variations in water level, the irrigation system is not spreading evenly. Fix the sprinkler system and repeat this process until the measurement in each can is about equal.



Checking contents of container.

The suggested application is one-half inch of water each irrigation.



2. In Utah, average high temperatures during the growing season reach 90 to 100 degrees F. The recommended application rate of water is one-half inch per irrigation. Mark a line one-half inch from the bottom of the container. Turn on the water and observe how long it takes to fill the containers to the marks. This provides the amount of time it will take for the homeowner to apply the recommended amount of irrigation water. Three or more irrigation cycles, with an hour break in between each cycle, are also recommended when applying one-half inch of water. This program will account for different soil types and will prevent run off as well as deep percolation of irrigation water.

Example: Most time clocks have an option to make it easier to set up the cycles. The irrigation test may indicate that 21 minutes of irrigation are needed to apply one-half inches of water. Dividing 21 minutes by 3 irrigation cycles requires that three cycles of 7 minutes each should be applied with one hour of soak time in between each cycle.

3. Plants use less water in the spring and fall than in the summer and irrigation frequency should be adjusted to accommodate these differences. Following this schedule can save you as much as

half of your yearly water usage. Common sense habits like turning your sprinklers off during rainstorms or adding a rain shutoff device to your system is also an important part of the equation. Following this schedule will, in an average weather year, supply as much water as your lawn needs

It is possible to save water and have a healthy lawn. Take some time to train yourself and your lawn to be consistently efficient. The results will be worth it. Remember, for every unnecessary irrigation that is eliminated you will save enough water for about 104 showers, 52 baths, 52 loads of laundry, or 312 toilet flushes.

Concept introduced by U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Utah Division of Water Resources, and Utah State University Extension.

Special thanks to Joe Whittaker of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Kelly Kopp of Utah State University for their instruction.

Irrigation Schedule	
Month	Interval
Startup until April 30	Once every 7 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 12 days



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