

Drought Survival: Lawn Care

Lawns can be the thirstiest element in the landscape

Lawns are generally the single biggest water user for a typical property. That means they offer the greatest potential for water savings. A small lawn can use more than 18,000 gallons of water per year!

Consider eliminating unused lawn and re-landscaping with permeable paving materials and plants appropriate for our local climate.

Watering a Lawn During a Drought

Managing the water that you apply to your lawn is essential. Here are a few tips:

- ➔ Reduce your irrigation by at least 20%. During normal years, lawns require water two days per week in spring and fall, and two to three days per week in the middle of summer.

However, during the drought, lawns can survive on considerably less water. Depending on your reduction goal, reduce the number of watering days per week and/or reduce the minutes of watering per day. The lawn won't look its best, but it will survive.

- ➔ Use the "cycle and soak" method of watering to reduce runoff and water waste. Split your watering time into two cycles spaced about an hour apart to allow the water to soak in.
- ➔ Check your sprinkler heads regularly to make sure they work properly. Repair broken, crooked or sunken heads and clogged nozzles. Adjust the spray pattern to prevent sprinklers from watering pavement.
- ➔ Replace old fan nozzles with high efficiency nozzles to slow runoff and improve coverage. Check pressure to reduce water waste from misting.



- Water early in the morning between midnight and 6AM when it is cooler, the wind is calm and there is little evaporation.
- Watch your lawn rather than a calendar. When your lawn takes on a blue-grey tone or the grass blades don't spring back after you walk on it, it is time to water.
- Hand-water small dry spots rather than turning up the watering schedule for your whole lawn.
- Lawn areas in shade (north/east side of the house) will generally require 50 percent less water than lawns on the sunny side of the house. Adjust your watering schedule accordingly.

Maintaining a Lawn During a Drought

If you have good reasons to keep your lawn, here are some simple maintenance tips that will help it survive the drought.

- Mow lawns 2½-to-3 inches high once a week. Taller grass blades promote deeper roots and will shade the soil, resulting in less evaporation.
- Use a lawn aerator to perforate the soil with small holes to increase air, water and nutrients infiltration into the root system.
- Reduce fertilization and limit to the spring and fall. Actively growing plants use more water, and fertilizers can damage already stressed root systems. Consider using organic fertilizers for increased water savings.
- Trim the grass adjacent to sprinkler heads to ensure the sprinkler spray is not blocked.
- Avoid mowing your lawn on the day it is watered to reduce soil compaction.
- Drought-stressed turf is more easily damaged by traffic. Keep foot and equipment traffic on the lawn to a minimum.
- Leave clippings on the lawn as you mow to add nutrients back to the soil.

Contact the Santa Clara Valley Water District at (408) 630-2554 to schedule a free landscape evaluation and to get information about the Irrigation Equipment Upgrade Rebate and Landscape Conversion Rebate.



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