

Irrigation System Conservation Tips

The goal of any irrigation system is to give plants a sufficient amount of water without waste. By using a zone irrigation system, grassy areas can be watered separately and more frequently than groundcover plants, shrubs and trees.



Sprinkler irrigation is the most common used method of landscape watering. Two types of sprinkler irrigation systems that are common are the hose-end sprinkler and the permanent underground system. Both systems require little maintenance and apply large volumes of water in a short time.



Residents who have permanent sprinkler systems should make sure the sprinkler heads are adjusted properly to avoid watering sidewalks and driveways. Also, a properly adjusted sprinkler head sprays large droplets of water instead of a fog of fine mist which is more susceptible to evaporation and wind drift. The use of a timer for both systems is also recommended.

Studies recommend that St. Augustine and Bermuda grass be watered 1 inch every 5 to 7 days. To determine how much water your sprinkler system applies, follow these steps:

- Set three to five empty cans at different distances from the sprinkler heads.
- Run the sprinkler for 30 minutes.
- Add the number of inches of water in all the cans and divide the total by the number of cans to obtain the average.
- Multiply the average by two to determine how many inches of water are applied in one hour.
- Subtract the rainfall received from 1 inch to determine water needed. Run the sprinkler timer for the correct amount of time based on the number of inches the sprinkler applies in an hour.

Plan to water during the early morning or evening hours since evaporation losses will be up to 60 percent higher during the day. Also, do not water on windy days.



Other items to help reduce water use include:

- Do not cut grass too short. Longer blades of grass will reduce evaporation.
- Use mulches in flower and shrub beds.
- Leave grass clipping on lawn after mowing. This provides a natural fertilizer.
- Use soaker hoses to water flower beds, trees and shrubs. 💧



Source: Texas A&M University Agricultural Extension and the Texas Water Development Board.