

## Watering Established Lawns

### Quick Facts...

- Soil preparation is critical to the rooting depth and drought tolerance of turf.
- The best time of day to irrigate is between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- Lawns grown on sandy soil require more frequent irrigation applications (with less water per application) than lawns grown on clay soil.
- Add 1 to 1-1/2 inches of water per week (minus any rainfall) during the summer months.
- Keep the intervals between irrigations as long as possible.

### Soil Type

Different types of soil absorb and retain moisture differently.

Soil type	Water absorption	How deeply 1 inch of water penetrates <sup>1</sup>
Sandy	Absorbs water quickly; needs less water more frequently	12 inches
Loam	Absorbs water evenly, without puddling or runoff	7 inches
Clay	Absorbs water slowly; can cause runoff when water applied too quickly; holds water longer (slow to dry out)	4–5 inches

Healthy grass roots typically grow at least 6–8 inches deep.

### Frequency

Irrigate when the turf indicates water is needed. Look for signs of wilt, which often show up in the same location on the lawn time after time. Footprints or lawn mower tracks that remain at least one half hour after traffic has passed indicates irrigation is needed. Turf will also turn a shade of blue-gray when it is water stressed and in need of irrigation.

Do not irrigate again until you see signs of wilt. It's important that the soil profile dries somewhat between irrigation applications. Continually water-logged soils are deprived of oxygen which is required for proper root growth.

### Time of Day to Irrigate

The best time to irrigate your lawn is between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. During this period it is generally cooler, less windy, and the humidity is higher so evaporation losses are less. Water pressure may also be higher at this time providing a more even spray distribution pattern.

Irrigating between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. also overlaps with the turf's natural dew period. Most diseases of turf occur when grass blades are wet for longer than 14 consecutive hours. Watering before 10 p.m. or after 6 a.m. extends the natural wetness period and increases disease problems. Dew contains substances exuded from the plant tissue. These materials increase the growth of

disease organisms. Water applied between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. dilutes these materials thus reducing the growth of turf disease organisms.