



Save water and go green.

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Now that Memorial Day is upon us and we have just experienced a very wet Spring and as we venture into the Summer months, we shouldn't take for granted one of the most abundant natural resources the Dayton area has to offer. You might be thinking it's pollen as your hay fever and allergies have undoubtedly felt the effects recently, but I am referring to water. We are very fortunate to have the supplies underground and the five rivers that add to the attractiveness of Dayton.

When moving into a new home, the lawn and landscaping usually are the last items to garner the deserved attention. Given these times when "green" is becoming the prudent way of life, considering the following tips from the folks at the Greene County Sanitary Engineering department will help you maintain your lawn more water efficiently, which preserves the environment and saves you some money.

BEFORE YOU INSTALL A LAWN

Choose the right type of grass for your climate and yard and make sure the soil preparation will support a good lawn.

- Chose the right time to lay sod or plant seed.
- Control weeds.
- Have soil tested and apply corrective measures as needed.
- Remove stones and debris from soil.

FERTILIZING

- If possible, use fertilizers with lower nitrogen and higher phosphorus content: 20-10-10 instead of 33-2-2. The first number is nitrogen and is great for top growth but not for root development. The second and third numbers (Phosphorus and Potassium) promote deeper root development. The deeper the root, the more drought-resistant the lawn.
- Base your actual fertilization on the results of a soil test.
- Choose the best time to apply the type of fertilizer you choose.
- Core aeration of the lawn allows fertilizer and water to sink into the ground.

MOWING

Mowing practices also help in conserving water. Mowing grass three to four inches instead of one to two inches tall helps to establish a deeper root system. (Usually the height of the grass is the depth of the roots). This deeper root system helps in dry times. You will notice when irrigation is turned off for week or more the lawn will turn brown. The grass will be considerably greener in non-irrigated areas that have been mowed higher.

- Raise the mowing height as summer progresses to encourage deep rooting.
- Sharpen pruning shears and mower blades as dull blades encourage plant water loss and introduction of disease.
- Keep clippings on the lawn to create a thatch.

IRRIGATION

- Water Saving Equipment is available for your system - seek your landscape professional's advice on what is best for your lawn care needs.
- Most lawns in this area will accept one-fourth to one-third inch of water per hour due to the clay soil in the area. Set times per station so that they will apply approximately one third of an inch of water per cycle.
- Let the condition of the grass determine when to apply moisture usually just as the plants begin to wilt. (The lone exception is new sod or seed, which requires more water.)
- Frequent, shallow watering tends to keep the upper layers of soil near saturation, leading to shallow roots and a lawn that is susceptible to disease and insect attack.
- Water **ONLY** the plants. Water landing on a sidewalk, driveway, or street is wasted.
- Comply with watering restrictions issued by your water authority.
- Water only in the early morning hours. Watering in the afternoon increases loss to evaporation; late night watering increases the chance of disease.

What to do during a drought or dry weather

- Withhold fertilizers.
- Reduce mowing frequency.
- Reduce or eliminate traffic on grass areas.
- Minimize water applications for all plant materials to essential amounts needed to maintain plant vitality.
- In case of severe drought, adjust automatic timers to manual or use hose-end sprinklers to apply one quarter inch of water per week. The dormant lawn will have a tan, golden or light brown appearance. Light/infrequent watering - as little as one inch per month - will be sufficient to keep the grass alive.