

How to water to establish a lawn

When watering to establish or reestablish a lawn, we normally call for 2-3 “mists” throughout the day for the first 7-10 days until roots get established. These are just 10 minute bursts. Then back off to once a day for about ½ hour for 7-10 days. Then go to 2-3 times a week for about 7 days. By then your lawn should be established.

If we are experiencing adequate rainfall, you should adjust this schedule. Rain counts. But in the absence of sufficient rain, you need to provide enough water at the correct time to allow your new sod to root by following the above directions.

A well designed and correctly installed irrigation system with a controller, operated correctly, helps to achieve uniform establishment. It can be difficult or impossible, inconvenient and time consuming to uniformly provide sufficient water to establish a lawn with hose-end sprinklers, especially if the lawn is sizeable and during dry weather. Most people are not going to do the necessary job of pulling hoses around on a regular basis to result in a well established lawn.

Too much water will result in rot, diseased roots and diseased seedlings. Too little water will result in the sod, seedlings, sprigs or plugs drying excessively. The end result of too much or too little water, at best, is a poorly established sparse lawn with weeds. Or, at worst, complete failure.

There is no substitute or remedy for incorrect irrigation when establishing a brand new lawn or when renovating an entire lawn or areas within a lawn.

It would be wise to not invest the necessary time and money if the new lawn cannot be irrigated correctly. Taking the gamble that adequate (not too much, not too little) rainfall will occur exactly when needed to result in a beautiful, healthy, thick, lush lawn is exactly that – a gamble.

An irrigation system is nothing more than a tool to supplement rainfall. As much as possible, learn to operate the irrigation controller using the “Manual” setting. It is also wise and is State law to have a rain shutoff device installed and operating correctly. A rain shutoff device overrides the controller when it is raining or when sufficient rainfall has occurred. Rain shutoff devices are relatively inexpensive and easily installed. Also, a rain gauge can be an inexpensive tool to help you monitor how much rain you’ve received. Rain counts.

The above schedule should help when planting a lawn from seeds, sprigs, plugs or sod.

For additional information on establishing and maintaining a Florida lawn, contact your County UF/IFAS Extension Office or visit <http://yourfloridalawn.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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