



YARD

Lawn Care

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Quick Facts...

Proper watering can promote a deeply rooted, healthier turf.

Let grass species and health, soil conditions, and weather conditions dictate irrigation practices, not the number of days between waterings.

Mow bluegrass, ryegrass, fescue and wheatgrass to a height of 2 to 3 inches. Buffalo-grass and blue grama lawns can be mowed to this height, but also do well unmowed.

Core cultivation is essential for all lawn areas, especially those that are thatchy or subject to high traffic.

Before planting a lawn, decide on the desired quality, how the lawn will be used, and how much time and money you are willing to invest. Have your soil tested. Contact your Colorado State University Cooperative Extension county office for information on soil testing. Soil amendments can easily be added before planting. High quality sod or seed also helps ensure a satisfactory lawn.

Watering

Many factors influence lawn water requirements, and no two lawns are exactly alike. A healthy, high-quality bluegrass or ryegrass lawn may need up to 2.25 inches of water per week under hot, dry, windy summer conditions. It may require much less when the weather is cool or cloudy. Turf-type tall fescue may perform well with less water than a bluegrass lawn, if it can grow a deep root system. In many cases, however, tall fescue requires as much water as bluegrass to look good. Buffalograss and blue grama lawns can remain green for weeks without watering, even during the hottest summer weather.

Shady lawns and areas protected from the wind require less water over the growing season than more exposed turf. However, the roots of mature trees and shrubs also need water. You may have to water more in mature landscapes where the roots of many plants compete for water. Healthy turf, encouraged by proper mowing, fertilizing and cultivation, uses water more efficiently.

Application

Each time you water the lawn, apply enough water to moisten as much of the root zone as possible. Use a soil probe or shovel to determine what the average rooting depth is in your lawn. If the roots grow down 6 inches deep, water so the soil is moistened to that depth.

If the soil is mainly clay, apply 1 to 1 1/2 inches of water to moisten the root zone to a 6-inch depth. A sandy soil can be moistened to 6 inches by as little as 1/2 inch. It is important to know not only how deep the turf roots grow, but also how deep your irrigation water penetrates. Watering too deeply, especially on sandy soils, wastes water and allows it to percolate past the root zone.

Frequency

Based on the above, grass that grows on sandy soil must be watered more often than the same grass growing on clay or loam soils. Even after a thorough watering, sandy soils hold little plant-available moisture. They require more frequent irrigation with smaller amounts of water. Conversely, turf growing on a loamy-clay soil can be irrigated less frequently, with larger quantities of water. Watering less often means more efficient water use because of less loss to evaporation. It can also reduce the number of weeds that appear in the lawn.

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