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University of Minnesota Extension Turfgrass Science
www.extension.umn.edu/turfgrass

Water Saving Strategies for Home Lawns

Provided by University of Minnesota Extension

On average, three times more water is used during the summer than in the winter in the Twin Cities, and much of this water is used outdoors. If you own an irrigation system or water your lawn with portable sprinklers, you can reduce your overall water use by implementing some practical strategies:

1. Pay attention to the weather

During a Minnesota summer we may see heavy periods of rainfall followed by extended periods of drought. Homeowners with lawns should adjust irrigation practices accordingly. Operating irrigation controllers in manual mode is one way to monitor and cut down on water use, rather than using an automated schedule.

2. Select turfgrass species that use less water and can tolerate drought

Choice of grass species will impact irrigation requirements. Traditional turfgrass species for Minnesota include Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, fine fescue, and tall fescue. The fescue species offer the best drought tolerance potential.

3. Adjust irrigation programs to conserve water

To encourage rooting and drought tolerance, lawns should be irrigated infrequently (one time or less per week) with a sufficient volume of water (up to 0.5 inches). Set irrigation programs or sprinklers to water during the morning hours, because daytime irrigation is often lost through evaporation or wind deflection.

4. Implement water saving technologies

Rain sensors connected to irrigation controllers are vital to conserving water. There's no need for an automatic sprinkler system to be used when it's raining.

5. Conduct an audit on your irrigation system

Irrigation auditing is one great way to conserve water. Irrigation contractors will often perform this service for you if you have a contract with them. Auditing an irrigation system includes three basic steps: 1) checking system components including sprinklers, valves and controllers, 2) conducting a performance test, and 3) programming the controller. For more information on conducting an irrigation audit, visit the website provided below.

For more information:

U of M Extension Lawn Care: www.extension.umn.edu/turfgrass

U of M Turfgrass Science Blog: www.turf.umn.edu

Sustainable Landscape Information Series: www.sustland.umn.edu

U of M Yard and Garden News: <http://blog-yard-garden-news.extension.umn.edu/>

Conducting an irrigation audit: https://www.irrigation.org/Resources/Audit_Guidelines.aspx

ET estimates for Minnesota: http://agwx.soils.wisc.edu/uwex_agwx/sun_water/et_wimn

U of M Climatology Working Group: <http://climate.umn.edu/>