General Lawn Irrigation Tips

In addition to the simple irrigation audit, the following tips adapted from the Irrigation Association at www.irrigation.org can also help you to conserve water when watering your lawn.

1. Adapt your watering schedule to the weather and the season. Familiarize yourself with the settings on your irrigation controller. Adjust the watering schedule regularly to conform to current weather conditions. There are many times during the year when natural rainfall will provide adequate water to the lawn and landscape.

2. Turn the faucet off. Turfgrasses such as bermudagrass are drought-resistant and resilient. Although the grass may go dormant and turn brown during hot and dry periods, the crown or base of the plant will stay alive. Once the grass receives natural rainfall in the late summer or fall, it will actively grow and turn green again. A few key irrigation events may be needed, but watering deeply once per week to once every two weeks can be enough to enable the grass to green up once rainfall returns.

3. Schedule each individual zone in your irrigation system. “Scheduling” accounts for the type of sprinkler, sun or shade exposure, and the soil type for the specific area. The same watering schedule should almost never apply to all zones in the system.

4. Inspect your system monthly. Check for leaks, broken or clogged heads, and other problems, or engage an irrigation professional to regularly check your system. Clean micro-irrigation filters as needed.

5. Adjust sprinkler heads. Correct obstructions that prevent sprinklers from distributing water evenly. Keep water off pavement and structures.
6. Consider a professional irrigation system audit. If you find that your irrigation system may need adjustment based on the simple irrigation audit, you can hire a professional to conduct a professional irrigation audit and uniformity. The professional irrigation auditor can give you specific tips and plans to improve the efficiency of your irrigation system. The Irrigation Association maintains an online list of Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditors. You can visit their website at: http://www.irrigation.org.

7. Consider “smart” technology. Climate or soil moisture sensor-based controllers evaluate weather or soil moisture conditions and then calculate and automatically adjust the irrigation schedule to meet the specific needs of your landscape.

8. Install a rain shutoff-switch - inexpensive and effective. Required by law in many states, these money-saving sensors turn off your system in rainy weather and help to compensate for natural rainfall. The device can be retrofitted to almost any system.

9. Consider low volume drip irrigation for plant beds. Install micro-irrigation for gardens, trees and shrubs. Micro-irrigation includes drip (also known as trickle), micro-spray jets, micro-sprinklers, or bubbler irrigation to irrigate slowly and minimize evaporation, runoff and overspray.

10. Water at the optimum time. Water when the sun is low or down, winds are calm and temperatures are cool, between the evening and early morning, to reduce evaporation. You can lose as much as 50% of water to evaporation by watering mid-day.

11. Water deeply and infrequently. Saturate root zones and let the soil dry. Watering too much and too frequently results in shallow roots, and may increase weed growth and disease incidence.

Follow these tips and let’s save more water!