

# LAWN & LANDSCAPE WATERING SCHEDULE

CONTRA COSTA WATER DISTRICT

## SEASONAL CHANGES AFFECT WATER DEMAND

**Day Length** Doesn't it seem like it gets darker earlier in winter than in summer? Well, in fact it does. In winter, the sun rises later and sets earlier than in summer. June 21<sup>st</sup>, the summer solstice, is the longest day of the year with nearly 15 hours of daylight. December 21, the winter solstice, is the shortest day of the year with only 9 ½ hours of daylight. That's 5½ hours less sunlight! What does this mean for our lawns and landscapes? It means that as the days get shorter, lawns and landscapes will require less and less water.

**Sun Angle** Have you ever noticed that the sun doesn't go as high in the sky during the winter as it does in the summer? In fact, during December, the sun is only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> as high in the sky as it is in June. This has to do with the earth's axis and how the earth rotates around the sun. So how does this affect the water needs of my lawn and landscape? Well, when the angle of the sun is high in the sky, like in summer, the sunlight hits the earth more directly, which causes plants to need more water. When the angle of the sun is lower in the sky, like in winter, the sunlight hits the earth at a lower angle, which means plants need less water. This means that from June to December, plants will need less and less water.

## ADDITIONAL WAYS TO SAVE WATER IN YOUR GARDEN

### Mulch

Add mulch to all planting areas every year to ensure there is a 2" to 3" layer. This will improve plant health, reduce water evaporation loss, improve soil, and keep soil temperature cool in the summer. Additional mulch should be added at least once per year.

### Water Early

Don't water during the middle of the day. This can scorch the leaves. It's best to water in the early morning as the sun is rising and temperatures are cool.

### Manage Your Timer

Every two to four weeks, adjust the watering schedule to reflect changes in the weather. Reducing the watering schedule by one-minute on each sprinkler station can save more than 50 gallons per day!

### Reduce Your Lawn

Turf grass or lawn is the single biggest water-using plant in most home landscapes. Consider replacing some or all of your lawn with a beautiful garden. Ask your local nursery for plants that thrive in Contra Costa County.

### Mow

Mow lawns to 2.5 to 3 inches. This will improve the quality of the lawn and reduce water demand.

### Plants

Buy plants that thrive in our local climate, which has hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters.

### Use A Broom

Use a broom instead of a hose to clean your driveway or sidewalk and save up to 80 gallons of water every time.

### Aerate

Aerate your lawn. This allows water and oxygen to get to the roots. You can either leave the soil plugs on the lawn or remove them to another part of the garden.

For More Information On Water Conservation Programs and Tips, visit [www.ccwater.com](http://www.ccwater.com) or call (925) 688-8320



## WATERING TECHNIQUES

Landscape professionals use a variety of techniques to maximize landscape quality and water use efficiency. Below are several watering techniques that professional irrigators use to maximize every drop.

### Repeat Cycles

Clay soil can not absorb water as fast as sprinklers apply it. Therefore, instead of watering for one long cycle, use 2 or 3 shorter cycles with an hour in between. This will allow the water to soak in much better and encourage deeper roots.

### When to Water

The optimum time to water your landscape is between 3:00 AM and 8:00 AM. This is because the sun is down, the temperature is cooler, and the wind is



generally calm. Watering during the day can result in as much as 30% of the water being lost to evaporation.

### Micro-Climates

Plants growing in shade (north/east side of your house) will generally require up to 50% less water than the same plants in full sun (south/west side of your home). Adjust your watering schedule to account for the different microclimates in your garden.

### Check Sprinklers

Once a month inspect the sprinklers while they are working. Check for broken, bent or misaligned heads. Also trim back grass or other plants that are blocking the sprinkler.

## WATERING SCHEDULE

**Learn to Water Like the Pros-** The most efficient way to water lawns and landscapes is to apply water deeply and infrequently, adjusting the schedule to reflect seasonal changes. This will improve landscape quality, reduce water waste and even lower your water bills. The following is the recommended schedule for lawns and landscapes in Contra Costa County. The first section displays the recommended *minutes per day* and the table displays the recommended *watering days per week*.

### Minutes of Watering per Day

Lawns watered with pop-up spray sprinkles generally should be set to water for 3 cycles of 3 to 6 minutes per cycle. Lawns with impact or rotor sprinklers should be set to water for 3 cycles of 7 to 10 minutes per cycle. Set the watering cycles with an hour in between to allow the water to soak in.

Trees, Shrub, Groundcovers watered with pop-up spray sprinkles generally should be set to water for 3 cycles of 3 to 6 minutes per cycle. Landscape areas watered by impact or rotor sprinklers should be set to water for 3 cycles of 7 to 10 minutes per cycle.

### Watering Days Per Week

Adjust the watering days per week to reflect seasonal changes. The following table lists the recommended watering days per week for lawns and landscapes.

Month	Watering Days per Week	
	Lawns	Trees, Shrubs, Groundcovers
Jan, Feb, Mar	Off	Off
Apr	1	2
May	2-3	1
Jun	3-4	2
Jul	4	2-3
Aug	3-4	2
Sep	3	1-2
Oct	2	1
Nov	1	Off
Dec	Off	Off

*Note - due to individual site conditions, additional schedule adjustments may be necessary.*