

Overwatering Landscaping Increases Stormwater Pollution



When irrigation water or rainwater runs over landscaping, turf, and driveways it picks up fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides, grass clippings and petroleum products. Some of that water and pollution percolates into the ground and ends up in our aquifer. Excess water runs off into storm drains which may lead to ponds and wetlands.

Once established native, drought-tolerant and low water-use plants require minimal (if any) supplemental fertilizer and water. By selecting these plants for your landscaping you will reduce water waste, pollution, and save money.

Typical Watering Amounts

Sandy soils (most Florida) – apply $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of water each time you irrigate.

Clay soils – apply $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of water each time you irrigate.

Catch Can Test

You can use the “catch” can method to determine how much water to apply and to see if you are watering uniformly across the landscaped area. Place five to seven wide-mouthed, flat-bottom cans (cans about the size of an average tuna can) throughout the zones to be irrigated. Irrigate each zone as you normally would. When you have finished irrigating a zone, measure the depth of water in each can. Average the measurements and use this number to determine how long you need to water to apply three-quarters of an inch of water in each irrigation zone.

While testing your system using the “catch” can method is the most effective way to determine how much water you are applying, there are some general guidelines for inground systems. These guidelines are based on the type of head used in each irrigation zone.

- Rotor zones set between 45 and 60 minutes apply about three-quarters to an inch of water.
- Zones with spray heads set at 20 to 35 minutes generally apply the same amount.
- For newly installed planting beds, set micro-irrigation zones for 60 minutes twice a week for 30 days. Then cut back to once a week until plants are established, which will take no more than another month or two, depending on weather conditions. Then water only as needed.

Established turf needs irrigation only after about 30% of your lawn starts to wilt. Signs of wilting include footprints that remain in the grass long after being made, a bluish-grey appearance to the lawn, and a large proportion of leaf blades that are folded in half length-wise.



Sources & Additional Information

http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/home.cfm?program_id=6

<http://floridaswater.com/waterconservation/>

<http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/water/articles/systems/watering.shtml>