SAINT CHARLES
MISSOURI

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

Lawn Watering and Maintenance Guide

Keeping your lawn green and weed free can have serious impacts on streams and groundwater if not properly managed. Like a rain storm, runoff from a sprinkler can wash soil, lawn chemicals, pet waste and other unwanted pollutants into storm sewers that lead directly to area creeks, rivers and lakes. Because watering can upset our watersheds, there is a growing community interest in how to water correctly. Practical lawn watering tips will help produce healthy attractive lawns, conserve water, and keep our stormwater systems clean.

Overwatering
Water flowing across one driveway might not seem like a problem, but watering multiple lawns or connected properties at the same time can produce several concerns. Overwatering can wash pollutants into lakes, ponds and streams while depleting the water supply. Standing water from overwatering can create drainage issues, damage lawns and attract mosquitos. Property owners along or near creeks should be especially cautious of overwatering as this can lead to bank erosion and loss of property

Watering an Established Lawn
It is possible to obtain a green lawn and conserve water. In fact, healthy lawns can survive several weeks of dormancy during summer with little to no water. When watering, it is best to water lawns at a rate of one inch per week to promote deep rooting. Excess watering can keep the soil too moist, resulting in damaged roots which can cause erosion problems in weak areas. Frequent, light watering actually favors shallow root growth and creates an environment where plants and grass will be unable to tolerate dry periods.

Try watering lawns early in the morning, between 4:00 am - 10:00 am. Early morning watering prevents extreme water evaporation from the sun. If your schedule will not accommodate early morning watering, consider a timed sprinkler, one that shuts off automatically. You might also consider adding a ground sensor so the sprinkler system does not run when it is not needed. For those small areas, use a sprinkler can or hand-held hose.

Proper Grass Height
To promote deep rooting and lawns that tolerate dry conditions, mow grass no shorter than two inches. Taller grass shades the soil surface and promotes a healthier lawn by reducing evaporation and helping prevent weed growth.

Types of Grass to Consider?
When considering new seed or sod, research tall fescue and zoysia. Tall fescue requires 25 percent less water and zoysia will require 50 percent less water than Kentucky bluegrass.

Watering a Newly Planted Yard
Be conscious when watering a newly planted yard. Overwatering can wash away or cause seeds to rot before they germinate. Overwatering can also increase the chances of disease which will slow the growth of new grass. Don't forget to turn off the sprinkler!

Fertilizers and Pesticides
Excessive amounts of fertilizers and pesticides applied to lawns and gardens can be washed off through routine watering. Apply lawn chemicals only as directed by the product manufacturer. As the runoff travels across driveways, streets, saturated lawns, parking lots and other impermeable surfaces, it picks up pollutants before entering the stormwater system. Since this runoff is not cleaned, the water and all the pollutants it has picked up, are deposited into our area creeks, streams, rivers and lakes.

Clippings, Mulch, Compost and Aerate
Compost or mulch yard waste. Do not leave this waste it in the street or sweep it into the storm drain. Grass clippings and leaves that enter into the storm drain contribute to organic matter entering the waterways. Be sure to cover dirt piles or mulch that are not being used immediately to prevent it from being washed into the street or storm drains during a rain event. Finally, aerate your lawn to improve water penetration and reduce runoff.