Efficient Lawn Watering

An integral part of turf management.

Determining a fitting maintenance protocol for a healthy lawn really begins with the soil type or base on which the lawn is growing. Topsoil and soil type, sand, loam or clay, and the amount of it will influence lawn care measures. It is not uncommon for some newer lawns to be seeded to or sodded on a mere 7 or 8 centimeters of topsoil. The frequency and amount of irrigation required, drainage , the amount of mechanical aeration, if any, the species of turfgrass in the lawn mix and an appropriate fertility program for that turf stand are all related to soil type.

Water only when your lawn needs it. On average, a lawn on sandy soil will require watering once per week, loam every 11 days and clay every 17 days. Obviously, weather will vary and influence these frequencies. Overwatering can result in water logged soil and create an environment that is favourable for the development of several fungus diseases . The most effective indicator of your lawn's need for water is colour. When the lawn takes on a a smoky grey appearance and loses it's resilience (lasting foot printing is a good indicator), it's time to irrigate.

Water infrequently and deeply. Heavier and infrequent irrigation encourages a deep and hardy root system. On the other hand, light infrequent waterings encourage weak turf. Research has proven that frequent light irrigation results in greater total water use, shallow rooting, rapid build up of salts due to lack of leaching, disease favourable environment, compaction and greater water loss from evaporation. Light frequent watering will also encourage the incidence of undesirable species like native creeping bentgrass and annual bluegrass Poa annua sp. Try to water 1" (2.54 cm) per sprinkler move on an average of once per week depending on weather and soil type. To determine the length of time required to deliver an inch of water to a given area, simply place empty tin cans in a few locations within the sprinkler's range.

Water at the correct time. Early morning watering is best. Irrigation between 4 AM and 8 AM allows for good water conservation. Furthermore, the lawn's surface will dry and not provide a suitable environment for disease development. Although late evening is a good time for water utilization and economy, it does encourage fungus problems and therefore should be avoided. Mid day irrigation is subject to the influence of wind and higher temperatures thereby increasing losses by evaporation. By all means, stick to the municipal guidelines and water restrictions in your area.

Target your watering. Try to use a sprinkler that can be regulated to reach specific target areas in either full , half or quarter circle segments without too much interference from wind. The pulsating golf course type sprinklers are quite effective in directing water to turf areas and not the pavement. Try to tend to small areas by hand watering.

Exceptions. Newly seeded lawns require regular light irrigations throughout the germination and establishment period. A few light waterings during each day may be necessary. Try to avoid puddling and washing away of new seed. Similarly, newly sodded lawns will require frequent watering until the root system takes hold. Some nutritive and/or pest control amendments require some irrigation either before or after application in order to further enhance effectiveness