

Consider a watering plan this summer

Marilyn Hawkey – published June 10, 2020 in The Connection

Soon, soaring summer temperatures will prompt us to water our lawns. We all know that too much of a good thing is harmful. Over watering our lawns is harmful to the grass and potentially the lake. WATeR has outlined generally accepted best management practices (BMPs) for watering lawns that are supported by research from the UT's Agricultural Extension Service. 1. Water deeply. 2. Water your lawn twice a week. If your home address number is **odd**, water on **Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday**. If your home address number is **even**, water on **Monday, Wednesday, or Friday**. 3. Water between 3 am and 9 am. 4. Turn off your automatic sprinkler system if it rains one inch (1") or more per week. These four basic BMPs are meant to keep your lawn healthy, the lake free of excess chemicals that promote the growth of algae and unwanted vegetation and to help balance water pressure in the Village and likely in other neighboring communities.

Watering **deeply** means soaking the soil 4" – 6" inches deep. This practice promotes deep rooting of lawn grasses which reduces root burning from direct sunlight and preserves the root system when extended droughts occur. Avoid light, frequent watering because it will cause a shallow root system to form and your lawn will suffer from the burning sun and periods of drought.

How does a homeowner determine the length of time it takes for his/her watering system to achieve a deep watering? An established lawn requires 1" to 1 ½" inches of water per week including rainfall or ½" to ¾" per irrigation period for two (2) periods per week. An easy way to figure out the amount of time you need to water your lawn to achieve the ½" to ¾" per period goal is to place three (3) 2" - 3" inch deep cans in one of your watering zones. Water your lawn until the water in the can reaches the desired level. Average the volume of water accumulated in the three (3) cans. The amount of time you need to achieve a deep watering goal is now known. You may have to increase or decrease your

duration timer to maintain your deep watering time goal. Per your house number, set your timer to water 2 days per week on odd or even days. But, if rainfall is equal to or exceeds 1" inch per week, turn your timer off, save money and let "mother nature" water your lawn for free.

After each deep watering, let the lawn thoroughly dry out. When you see your footprints on the lawn, it is time to water. Watering between 3 am and 9 a.m. is ideal. First, in the early morning the wind is most calm. Strong day time breezes blow the water about and distribute it unevenly. Second, you limit the amount of time droplets are exposed to the sun. This reduces the amount of water loss from evaporation. Third, watering earlier than 3 am will leave water on the blades too long and can cause the growth of fungus.

Low water pressure is a concern to many and is caused when most homeowners water lawns on **Monday, Wednesday and Friday** mornings. Simultaneous neighborhood demand for water puts enormous strain on the supply. An easy no-cost way to resolve this problem and maintain stable water pressure is for residents to water from 3 am to 9 am 2 days a week on odd/even days. The result is a "balancing" effect on neighborhood water pressure. And, the amount of water available for showers and laundry later in the morning is increased. The odd/even watering pattern has been adopted by many communities throughout the United States whether they live in a water rich area like ours or in a drought prone region. It is time to realize that if this didn't make financial and management sense, people wouldn't do it. Let's implement the program in our neighborhoods.

BMPs may require you to work with your irrigation service technician who may not fully understand BMPs for your lawn. Talk to your service provider technician when they set up your watering timer to establish a deep watering program per your house number on odd or even days. Or, for best results, do it yourself!

How useful are automatic rain sensors? They are designed to turn off your irrigation system if it is raining and avoid over watering. Great idea,

but they commonly fail in about a year and must be replaced. The BMP is not to use the sensor and manually turn your timer off in heavy rain because 1" to 1 ½" inches of water (the weekly goal) accumulate quickly. Over watering your lawn is an unnecessary expense and can damage the lawn with mold and diseases.

In summary, the four (4) BMPs to effectively water your lawn can do the following: keep money in your pocket, sustain a healthy lawn, keep phosphorous and nitrogen out of the lake which decreases the risk for algae and unwanted vegetation, and balances water demands that decrease the risk for low water pressure for all residents.

WATeR is an all-volunteer, not-for-profit organization. To learn more, visit WATeR's web site at www.Tellicowater.org and read the UT's Agricultural Extension Services booklet on Fertilization & Management of Home Lawns. Contact us at Tellicowater@aol.com. Become a member and sustain WATeR's effort to protect and improve the quality of water in the Tellico Reservoir and Watershed.