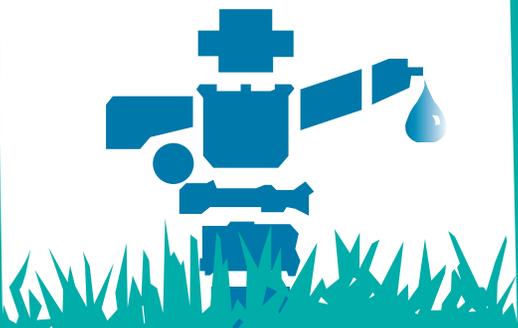


Do Your Part

IRRIGATE SMART

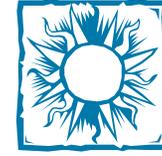
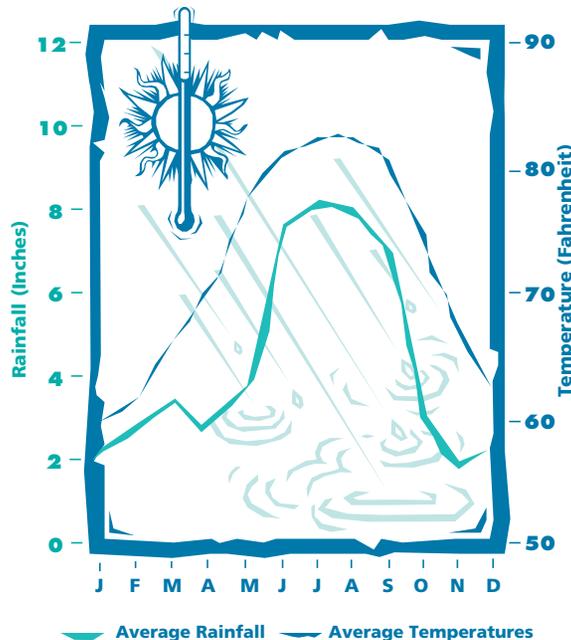


Southwest Florida
Water Management District



In light of our area's long-term water supply challenges, it is important to be familiar with the water needs of your particular landscape and to give plants and grass only the water they need. We all benefit when we do our part to irrigate smart!

The Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) and the Green Industry Advisory Committee of the District, a volunteer group of landscape professionals, offer this information to help you irrigate your lawn and landscape wisely.



Seasonal Changes in Florida

Florida does not have as dramatic weather changes as its neighbors to the north. However, seasonal fluctuations in rainfall and temperature do occur, which mean the water needs of our lawns and landscapes change.

Fall & Winter

From October through February, temperatures get cooler and plants go into a dormant or resting stage. Irrigation can be reduced to once every week or two.

Spring & Summer

March, April and May are months with little rainfall and the driest soil conditions. Naturally, outdoor water use tends to be high at that time. However, plants will show you when they need water. For example, plants and shrubs will need water at the first sign of wilting. Also, wilted grass usually folds along the blade line or does not spring back after you walk on it.

The Florida rainy season historically begins in June and continues through September. During the summer, lawns and landscapes need about 1 to 1 1/2 inches of water a week. If your area experiences a normal rainfall in the summer, a sprinkler system may not have to be turned on at all!

Tips to Irrigating Smart

- Don't overwater — too much water can cause root rot and other plant diseases.
- Does your sprinkler system water evenly? Call the District for a free brochure on how



to measure the amount of water your irrigation system applies. Or for a free irrigation audit, contact your local U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service, or County Soil and Water Conservation office.

- Regularly check that sprinkler systems and timing devices are working correctly. Watch for broken or misdirected sprinklers. Broken pipes can waste 5 to 10 gallons of water per minute.
- Follow the water restrictions in your area and encourage your neighbors to do the same. If you are not sure when to water, contact the District for a watering schedule.
- Water only in the early morning or early evening hours. Water evaporates quickly on hot and windy days.
- Irrigate less often during the summer rainy season and the cooler winter season.
- A recent Florida law dictates that all new irrigation systems include an automatic rain shut-off valve. Consider adding this high-value, low-cost valve to your current system.
- Slow, direct drip irrigation on shrubs and flower beds saves water and keeps foliage dry, preventing disease.
- Avoid overwatering or underwatering plants by grouping plants together that use the same amount of water.



Landscaping the “Irrigate Smart” Way

- Consider using the Xeriscape™ landscaping principles which include preplanning and design, selecting the right plants, analyzing the soil, using practical turf areas, installing efficient irrigation, and using mulch and proper maintenance.
- Raise the lawn mower blade to encourage grass roots to grow deeper.
- Mulch in all appropriate places at a depth of three inches. Mulch controls weeds and holds in moisture.
- Use drought-tolerant native plants or drought-tolerant plants adapted to Florida’s climate. Always make sure to plant the right plant in the right place.
- Group plants with similar water needs together to reduce unnecessary irrigation.
- Fertilize only as needed with slow-release fertilizers. Over-fertilization requires more watering and mowing.
- Water trees and shrubs thoroughly. They have extensive root systems that require less watering than other plants in the landscape.
- Don’t use your sprinkler system just to water thirsty plants and dry spots — water them by hand.



*Brought to you by the
Southwest Florida Water Management District
and the Green Industry Advisory Committee*

Ask the Experts!

You may need more detailed information that relates to your own lawn and landscape. The following associations promote smart water conservation. Give them a call and they will be glad to help you do your part to irrigate smart. You can have a beautiful landscape — and save water too!

County Cooperative Extension Services

- Charlotte (941) 639-6255
- Citrus (352) 726-2141
- DeSoto (863) 993-4846
- Hardee (863) 773-2164
- Hernando (352) 754-4433
- Highlands (863) 402-6540
- Hillsborough (813) 744-5519
- Lake (352) 343-4101
- Levy (352) 486-5131
- Manatee (941) 722-4524
- Marion (352) 620-3440
- Pasco (352) 521-4288
- Pinellas (727) 582-2100
- Polk (863) 533-0765
- Sarasota (941) 316-1000
- Sumter (352) 793-2728

Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association (FNGA)
1-800-375-3642 • www.fnga.org

Florida Irrigation Society, Inc. (FIS)
1-800-441-5341 • E-mail: FIS1234@aol.com

Florida Native Plant Society
(561) 562-1598 • www.fnps.org

Southwest Florida Water Management District
(352) 796-7211 or
1-800-423-1476 (Florida only)
TDD only 1-800-231-6103 (Florida only)
www.swfwmd.state.fl.us

The Southwest Florida Water Management District does not discriminate upon the basis of any individual's status. Anyone requiring reasonable accommodation under the ADA should contact the Communications and Community Affairs Department at (352) 796-7211 or 1-800-423-1476 (Florida only), extension 4757; TDD only 1-800-231-6103 (Florida only).