



**LAWN IRRIGATION**

by David R. Giger, Yolo County Master Gardener

One of the questions most frequently asked of Yolo County Master Gardeners is “How much should I water my lawn?” The correct amount of water applied to your lawn will make it healthy and beautiful. Each time you water your lawn you should apply enough so that the entire root zone is moistened. In general, the root zone is about 5 or 6 inches deep. Most of our gardens in Yolo County have a heavy clay soil. It takes about 1 inch of applied water to reach the full depth of the grass roots in this type of soil.

To determine the amount of application that will equal 1 inch of water place 6 to 8 empty tuna cans (or similar containers) around your lawn. Turn on the sprinklers for 15 minutes. Measure the amount of water in each can and then take an average (total number of inches of water in all the cans divided by the number of cans). Then look at the following table to determine how long to water:

<u>Average Amount of Water</u>	<u>Time to Water</u>
1/4 inch	15 minutes
1/2 inch	30 minutes
3/4 inch	45 minutes
1 inch	60 minutes

If you see that you are flooding the gutter before you’ve applied 1 inch of water then apply one half the amount, wait an hour or two, and then apply the second half. In order to increase the amount of water penetrating your lawn you can de-thatch and/or aerate it. Now that you know how long to water, what about the frequency? See the next table:

<u>Daytime Temperatures</u>	<u>Times to Water per Week</u>
70 to 79 degrees F.	1
80 to 89 degrees F.	2
90 to 99 degrees F.	3
100+ degrees F.	4

This table should be used from about March 1 to October 31. However, between November 1 and February 28 it is a good idea to turn on the sprinklers once every 2 weeks if it has not rained. You may need to adjust the frequency of summer watering depending on the amount of sun/shade that the lawn receives and the type of grass you have. Increase the frequency for lawns that are 100% bluegrass. Decrease the frequency for shaded lawns and lawns made of 100% Bermuda grass. The best time to water is in the early morning between 2 am and 7 am. To be sure that your lawn is receiving the correct amount of water check it about once a month. Take a weeder tool (resembles a big screwdriver with a forked end) and push it into the lawn in several places. It should penetrate fairly easily to at least 5 inches if moisture is adequate.

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