



Winter Lawn Watering Guide

I should stop watering my lawn in winter, right?

The weather is cooling. The days are getting shorter. This means our lawn and landscape no longer needs water, right? Not so! To keep turf, trees, perennials and shrubs healthy year-round, we still must continue with some supplemental watering. With added rainfall, we won't have to water as much, but roots will continue to need moisture through the winter months. Even dormant plants need water.

Unfortunately, it's usually feast or famine when it comes to how most of us care for our winter lawns. Many of us don't water at all and those of us that do tend to over-water. St. Augustine lawns are especially susceptible to damage from over-watering. The trick is finding just the right balance.

How much water is enough? The best policy for most of our landscapes is to turn off the automated sprinkler system in winter. Left on with the same schedule you use in spring and summer, you'll most definitely over-water your landscape. You can typically supplement natural rainfall by manually running your system as needed between the rains.

A good rule of thumb is 1" of water per week on established landscapes. As always, a good soaking once a week is best to encourage deep-growing roots. If it has rained, you most likely will not need to run your sprinkler. Supplement with hand-watering on containers, new plantings and veggie gardens as needed. We recommend putting out a few rain gauges in various spots in the landscape so you'll know how much rain is falling and how to adjust water needs for the week.

How do you know if your landscape needs water? Try the old-fashioned screwdriver test: Push a screwdriver into the soil to a depth of 5 or 6 inches. If the soil is moist to that depth, you don't need to water. If it is dry, then you'll most likely need to water.

What if a freeze is coming? Watering before a freeze can help insulate roots. Moist soil stays slightly warmer than dry soil, so supplemental water during dry cold weather can help better protect plants from freezing temperatures.

Fall is also a good time to check irrigation systems are working properly. Need help finding a certified irrigation specialist? Give us a call.