Watering Your Florida Lawn

Water your Florida Lawn EARLY in the Morning!

Irrigate early in the morning, preferably between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m., so that grass blades will dry off quickly at sunrise. Extended wet periods can cause turf disease, so watering late in the day or at night is not a good idea. Irrigating between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. is not recommended. This will waste water, because the water will evaporate before it can soak into the soil and be absorbed by the roots.

Postpone or Reduce Fertilizer Applications

Grass is more stressed during droughts and water shortages. The last thing you want your grass to do, under water management restrictions, is to grow more. Hold off on the fertilization until the drought or water shortage has passed. Also, many fertilizers have a high salt content that can actually "burn" grass. You may apply a soluble iron formula, but the resulting green will not last long.

Lawn care professionals have a wider selection of fertilizer materials and application methods available to them than the average homeowner, and they may continue to apply fertilizers at low rates through a dry period.

Postpone Herbicide Applications

Herbicides—weed killers—can stress a healthy lawn even at the best of times. During a drought or water shortage, that stress can limit turf growth and reduce the turf’s ability to compete with weeds. So put off your herbicide applications until the drought or water shortage is over.

Spot-treat Lawn Pests, Only if Needed

Pesticides—chemicals that fight insects and other pests—should be applied only as needed. Spot-treat affected areas, not the entire lawn. These chemicals can damage drought-stressed grass. Always make sure you know what pest you have before embarking on a treatment plan, and always follow label directions. The label is the law.

Consider Using a More Drought-tolerant Turf Species

St. Augustinegrass is the most widely-used lawngrass in Florida, but its drought tolerance (how well it survives dry spells) is not the best. Other grass species, like bahiagrass and centipedegrass , have better drought tolerance. Although these grasses may turn brown during a drought, they are more likely to resume growth and turn green again when rain or irrigation resume. For more information on grass selection, read "Selecting a Turfgrass for Florida Lawns."