

# Lawn Care

T.M. REG  
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## WISE WATERING

**A**LMOST three-fourths the weight of green grass is water. Evidence of this can be observed weekly whenever the lawn is mowed. Green clippings are heavy and bulky. Allowing them to dry a few hours before raking makes their removal easier because there is only a fraction of the bulk and weight to handle.

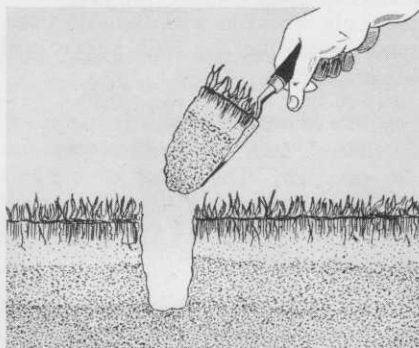
Knowing this composition of grass, it is easier to appreciate the significance of wise watering. Good turf grasses receiving adequate supplies will endure amazing extremes of temperature and traffic and still come through fresh and unfaded.

### Watch For Warnings

Nature provides thirsty signs in grass and the one best known of all is the brown area. This is the sign of damage already sustained. Fortunately turf grasses derived from permanent lawn mixtures recuperate surprisingly well if given half a chance. Lawns deserted for weeks in midsummer dry up and turn brown. Though they appear completely lifeless, they can often be revived simply by a judicious watering and fertilizing program.

With such snap-back qualities one may wonder why all the concern about proper watering of a lawn.

Real enjoyment of a lawn comes partly from its safe, soft padding as a play area. But largely it is a matter of appearance. The verdant carpet of a healthy lawn is the most pleasing setting yet discovered for buildings and gardens. Proper watering helps maintain the vibrant greenness of lawns.



Take turf plug to check moisture conditions. Water when surface begins to dry.

Other signs that water is needed appear before browning. If recognized in time, damage can be averted.

One is the cracking of heavy soils. The adobe soils of California and caliche soils of the southwest, for example, contract considerably as they dry. In this process they split wide open and the air vents thus formed accelerate the loss of water. On bare ground these warning cracks may be noticed right away. In a lawn, the grass covering hides them. Close inspection may reveal the trouble in time.

The blue spot is another warning. It is the first phase of wilting. Grass wilts when its moisture content evaporates through the blade surface at a faster rate or in greater quantity than the roots take it in from the soil. The blue spot is a dark, dull gunmetal color. It is distinguished quite easily by standing at one side of the lawn and scanning across the surface. Its presence should suggest testing the soil for moisture needs.

## Factors Affecting Drying

Lawns do not dry out evenly because they are influenced by various factors alone or in combination.

**Soil variations.** Even within a single lawn area there may be spots where the soil is sandier or more compact. If topsoil was added unevenly, the thin areas will dry first. If organic materials like manure or peat were unevenly mixed in with the soil, those spots containing the least humus will dry out first.

**Exposure to sun and wind.** Sunny areas because of their increased evaporation dry out first. The factor of wind is often overlooked but has a major influence on drying and the amount of watering to be done.

**Density of turf.** A thick lawn cuts down the loss of moisture by evaporation. One composed of grasses that do not form a sod needs more frequent watering. Related to the density of turf is the height at which the lawn is cut. Close clipping reduces the insulating effect of grass and should be accompanied by close attention to watering.

**Tree roots.** A shade tree may absorb 75 gallons of water a day from the undersoil yet the surface soil may still appear damp.

So it can be seen that one section of lawn may have a greater moisture requirement from another. In those parts of the west where there is no rainfall for many months and lawns are dependent solely on artificial watering, these differences become prominent. If sprinkling facilities are kept flexible, they can be adapted to these different requirements.

Variations like those above prevent formulating a rule that will apply to everybody's lawn. Getting acquainted with your own lawn, learning the spots that dry out first, will supply the answer better than any stranger can.

Until some experience is gained, it is good practice to sample the soil. A narrow trowel or a long bladed knife will easily cut a neat, three-sided plug and reveal if the top layer of soil is in need of water. It is wise to water whenever the top half-inch shows signs of drying.

## How Much Water?

Here are some suggestions that will help you answer the question, "How much water?" on your lawn. They can be used only as a guide and must be altered to fit individual lawns:

- 1 - *Remember to water whenever the top half-inch of soil shows signs of drying.*
- 2 - *Sandy soils dry out rapidly and therefore have to be watered frequently. This applies to lawns in Seattle, Tacoma and other Puget Sound Basin towns. It also applies to beach areas along the California coast.*
- 3 - *Clay soils can hold more moisture than sandy soils and for longer periods. They do not have to be watered as often. This applies to the adobe soils of California.*
- 4 - *Loam soil, which is midway between sand and clay, needs about 1 to 2 inches of water per week.*

This does not mean it is best to water only once a week and supply the whole amount in that one application. In most areas of the west  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 inch twice or even three times a week would be better.

## Rate of Application

Sandy soils will take in water at a rapid rate so most any of the available sprinkler types will work satisfactorily. On these porous soils the rate of application is no particular problem. The important thing is to realize their rapid loss of moisture and need for frequent rewetting.

On heavy clay or adobe soils the speed at which water is applied should be carefully watched. These soils absorb water very slowly and it must be applied only as fast as they can take it.

Many sprinklers, particularly the fountain type and spinner type, deliver

water too rapidly for heavy soils. In only a few minutes it runs off or puddles, creating the illusion that the soil is saturated. Actually it may be dry underneath though wet on top.

When this happens the sprinkler should be shut off or moved for a while, then repeated until adequate moisture has been supplied and absorbed. This may mean several sprinklings of light duration during the day.

## Types of Sprinklers

The kinds of sprinklers available are many and ingenious.

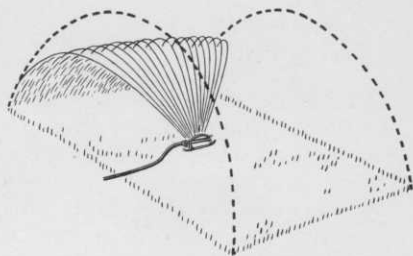
**Nozzle** — the hose nozzle adjusted to make a spray is one of the oldest forms. Its use on lawns has decreased under the continued urging of turf authorities because no one had the time to water a lawn adequately by this "personally attended" method. It is, however, one of the best ways of watering a new seeding.

**Spinning Sprinklers** — are an innovation that permits the covering of a larger area because the water drops are thrown by centrifugal force. Except for this they offer no advantage. In watering a thin turf they have the disadvantage of washing the soil away from the base of the plants because of the force of the thrown drops. If used in watering a new seeding, they may dislodge and wash the tiny seeds.

**Underground Systems** — are a type of installation which affords the easiest method of watering a lawn. They can utilize the fountain type and sometimes the whirling type of head. Fixed sprinklers do not easily provide for the different water requirements of different parts of a lawn. They cannot be moved to compensate for wind deflection. They should be checked periodically for coverage because sod building up around the heads can cut down the diameter of coverage or create blank spots.

**Slow Revolving Sprinklers** — are a modification of the spinning type. They throw a spray from a revolving nozzle. Because they apply water slowly they are good on heavy soils.

**Oscillating Sprinklers** — are one of the best for the small lawn on clay soil. They deliver water in a flat fan that arches back and forth. While sprinkling to one side, the soil covered on the opposite side has a chance to drink in the water and puddling or runoff is thus avoided.



On heavy soils use a sprinkler that applies water slowly.

In some cities lime deposits in the water accumulate and clog the moving parts or plug the holes and result in poor coverage. Any sprinkler should be cleaned occasionally to maintain it in top operating condition.

## When To Water

Evaporation is greatest during a sunny day of low humidity and with a breeze blowing. Because of this there is a common belief that night watering is best. There is also the belief that watering in sunlight will scald grass. Both beliefs have been pretty much disproven. The important thing is to keep the lawn adequately watered and do it when convenient.

During periods of hot, muggy weather it is preferable to water in the morning so the foliage does not go into the evening moist. Fungi are most active at night and in the presence of moisture.

## Special Problems

**New Seedings.** Tiny grass seeds are easily dislodged by heavy drops. The new seeding should be sprayed with almost a mist. Many gardeners prefer to use a hose nozzle for this because of its fine adjustment. The object is to keep just the surface soil damp so frequent light sprinklings are best, several times a day. If green algae appear, it is an indication that water is being applied too fast and too much.

**Terraces.** Steeply sloping areas permit much surface runoff of water and there is less penetration. Slopes facing south or west or to the prevailing wind allow rapid evaporation. On these areas additional watering is needed. It should be applied slowly as a fine spray so more of it will soak in and less of it run off.

## Things To Do In Early Fall

Turf damaged by insects appears to be suffering from lack of water. The grass turns brown in irregularly shaped patches. The presence of these pests may also be disclosed by birds flocking to the lawn to feed. They are after cutworms, grubs or sod webworms.

Lawn Moths continue to hatch their broods of sod webworms right up to the end of October. This insect, long prevalent in California, now appears to be spreading into the northwest.

May or June Beetles may have laid eggs in turf during summer. By fall these develop into grubs which feed on grass roots.

An application of Lawn & Turf Pest Control will effectively put a check on all these hungry vegetarians as well as on most species of ants.

*Lawn weeds also deserve attention.* By early fall many are in their most harmful stage of growth because they are producing seeds to pollute the soil and furnish future crops.

Treat weeds with 4-XD or Weed & Feed. Either of these materials quickly disposes of such broadleaved weeds as Dandelions, Bur Clover, Chickweed, Spurge, just to name a few.

*Where Crabgrass is running rampant,* it can be arrested with Scutl applied at five day intervals.

There are other grass types of weeds for which no chemical control has yet been found. By mowing the lawn frequently and catching the clippings, their seed production can be cut down.

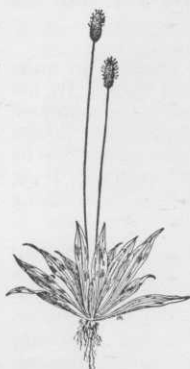
Regular feeding of the lawn should be continued through the fall season. If grass suffered summer injuries from insects, disease or drouth, a good turf building meal will help heal the scars by encouraging new green growth —

especially if proper watering is carried on in conjunction with it. Plan to feed your lawn two or three times during the fall season.

Bare spots should be reseeded. If the lawn has not knit into a dense sod, make a general overseeding with 2 pounds of seed for each 1000 sq ft.

## No Need to Tolerate Buckhorn

It's surprising to note in a late summer drive around the country that so many people tolerate Buckhorn in their lawns when it can be easily eliminated.



Buckhorn, a member of the Plantain family is also called Ribwort and English Plantain. It has lance shaped leaves, thickly tufted. Rootstocks are short and thick with many branching rootlets. It is most

obnoxious in the summer when it sends up wiry seed stems that defy the usual mowing. Buckhorn is about the ugliest possible weed in that condition.

A quick spreader application of Weed & Feed or 4-XD will quickly eliminate Buckhorn.

The presence of much Buckhorn is an indication of an impoverished soil that needs regular feeding and possibly liming to make conditions more favorable for grass growing.

Sirs:

We have used many weed killers but find that your Weed & Feed far excels the others. And living on a farm and working in town, the one application plan certainly saves time. Thank you for bringing such good products to us.

Albany, Oregon MRS. I. H. LANSING

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