

IRRIGATION AND SPRINKLER GUIDELINES

How green do you want your lawn? Water bans are becoming a regular occurrence, so maybe a lush, green lawn during a drought won't be possible, but keeping it alive may be. The Wenham Water Department offers these suggestions to help residents use and understand their irrigation systems.

- Every spring, be sure to have your whole system checked for leaks, broken or clogged heads and make sure the water is going on the lawn, not the driveway or street.
- **LEARN HOW TO OPERATE YOUR IRRIGATION SYSTEM, EVEN IF IT IS ONLY TO TURN IT ON OR OFF.** The most wasteful way to water a lawn is to set the system in the spring and shut it off in the fall.
- If your lawn needs re-seeding, it should be done before mid-May, or after Labor Day – Never try to start or repair a lawn during the summer.
- As the weather changes – temperature, rainfall etc., your sprinkler schedule needs to be changed as well.
- In the spring, established lawns almost never need watering. The temperature is cool so evaporation is almost nonexistent.
- It is a fact – lawns are much healthier when they are not watered constantly. The soil needs to dry **some** to allow proper growth.
- With adequate soil, lawns only need water once or twice a week even in hot dry weather. Make sure that you water long enough to soak to the roots, not just wet the top. (1 hour soaking)
- Consider installing a “Smart System”. These computer based controllers automatically determine your water needs based upon rainfall, temperature, humidity and wind. They can save up to 40%.
- Keep an eye on the weather – if rain is in the forecast, don't water. If the predicted rain doesn't come, you can always water later.
- If we do get a substantial amount of rain, shut off the sprinklers until the grass shows signs of needing water. This can be up to two or three weeks.
- The simplest, easiest way to reduce the need for watering is to not cut the grass too short. During hot, dry weather it should be kept at least 3” high. This is part of the re-education we all need – it may not look quite as groomed, but longer grass needs much less water and fewer chemicals.
- Be mindful of water bans. As required by MassDEP, Wenham has a ban on all sprinklers or irrigation between 9am and 5pm, May 1 to September 30, hand water is allowed. When the Ipswich River gets low, MassDEP has mandated that Wenham ban all “NON-ESSENTIAL WATER USE”. This means that only hand watering is allowed between 5pm and 9am, your sprinkler or irrigation system must be shut off.
- When the cooler fall weather arrives, shut off the system or at least water only once every week or two. This should be as early as Labor Day.
- The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection along with the Town of Wenham Water Use Restriction By-Law, require that private wells follow the same water ban as the public water supply.