

Many people desire to have a green lawn all summer, and consider their lawn and landscaping maintenance an essential part of maintaining the value of their property. However, incorrect lawn irrigation practices – specifically, overwatering the lawn – wastes water, costs you money in terms of water bills, and can damage your lawn. Overwatering can lead to diseases, weeds, rot and shallow root growth.

With a typical automatic irrigation system, homeowners – or their contractor – set the controller to water on a repetitive pattern (such as every day or every other day at 5:00 a.m.) at the start of the growing season, and the irrigation system operates on those settings for the entire growing season. While this practice is very common, it is not the proper way to water your lawn.

Most studies indicate that lawns require approximately one inch of water per week, whether by rainfall or by supplemental irrigation. Studies also recommend that it is best for the lawn to receive this amount of water in one, or at most two, deep soakings rather than more frequent shallow watering:

- *There are also lawn watering rules which should never be broken, such as quick watering or daily watering, these should never be implemented on established lawns, this creates a shallow root system which results in quick damage from heat stress, wastes an enormous amount of water and also aids in the promotion of weed and disease infestations.* (The American Lawn Guide – [www.americanlawnguide.com/lawn-watering.html](http://www.americanlawnguide.com/lawn-watering.html) )
- *Most lawns in Indiana will need from 1 to 1-1/2 inches of water per week depending on weather, soil type, slope, etc. It is best to apply this amount of water in a single thorough soaking, or two equal applications of water three to four days apart rather than in light irrigations every day. The soil should be wetted to the depth of the deepest root. Daily, light irrigations promote shallow rooting, non-drought hardy turf, and encourage crabgrass.* (Purdue University Turfgrass Program – [www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/pubs/ay-7.pdf](http://www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/pubs/ay-7.pdf) )
- *Watering too often (daily) results in less efficient use of water because of greater loss to evaporation. Excess watering can also increase the amount of weeds that appear in a lawn. Under most lawn situations in New Jersey, a thorough watering of a lawn more than twice per week is probably excessive.* (Rutgers University Agricultural Experiment Station – [www.mtmua.com/fs555.pdf](http://www.mtmua.com/fs555.pdf) )

The spring is the proper time to initiate proper lawn irrigation practices that will both benefit your lawn's health and reduce the amount of water you will use for lawn care. The following simple tips are recommended:

- If you water your lawn, do it infrequently. About one inch of water per week in one, or at most two, deep applications is best.
- Monitor rainfall, weather and the condition of your lawn and adjust watering accordingly. Do not set the automatic timer on an irrigation system at the start of the year and then forget it.
- Allow the soil to dry out between soakings. This will drive the grass roots to grow to greater depths and will help make your lawn more drought tolerant.
- Allow your grass to grow slightly longer. Mowing at a grass height of about 3-inches provides shade to the roots and soil surface, keeping them cooler and reducing the water lost to evaporation.