

Using a Water Gauge

You may have heard the phrase "water lawns 1 inch a week." While this is a good rule of thumb, it is based on your lawn's water needs as averaged throughout the year.

Our typical Pacific Northwest summers tend to be long, hot, and dry with rainfall at a minimum. Therefore, it is likely that your landscape may require more water during the summer months and less water during the spring and fall months when the weather tends to be rainier and cooler.

The key to watering efficiently is to frequently adjust the amount you water throughout the growing season as the weather and your plant's water needs change.

Determine Your Sprinkler's Output in Four Easy Steps:

1. Place two watering gauges at two different places within your sprinkler's spray range (1/3 and 2/3 of the distance between the sprinkler and the edge of the spray). Then run your sprinkler for 15 minutes². (You may also use a tuna can and a ruler to conduct this test)
2. Find the average amount of water (in inches) collected in your gauges. To do this, measure the amount of water in each gauge. Add these amounts together and divide by two. This is the average amount of water your sprinkler puts out in 15 minutes. (This will provide you with a good guideline amount. For increased accuracy, repeat steps 1 & 2 several times, placing the gauges at different distances from your sprinkler.)
3. Use this chart to see how much time it will take you to water one inch.

Average water depth after 15 minutes	Total time needed to water 1 inch
1/8"	= 120
1/4"	= 60
1/2"	= 30
3/4"	= 20
1"	= 15

- Set your base schedule. We recommend watering 2 times per week, either before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m. when temperatures are cooler. For example, if after 15 minutes your gauges have 1/2 an inch of water in them, you will need to water a total of 30 minutes per week to get the recommended 1 inch.

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
Minutes		15			15		

Take The Next Step:

If you have an automatic sprinkler system, you will need to program this base schedule into your sprinkler's controller. You can use the [Weekly Watering Number](http://www.conserveh2o.org) (<http://www.conserveh2o.org>), provided by the Regional Water Consortium, to fine tune your system's settings.

Notes:

- An established lawn needs about 1 inch of water each week and more during hot, dry spells. However, water needs vary from plant to plant, so it is best to check with your local garden center or landscape professional on your plant's specific watering needs.
- If run-off occurs, you will need to run your sprinkler for a shorter time period so that you are applying only the amount of water that your soil can absorb. Use watering gauges to figure out how much water your system distributes during this time, and then figure out how many times you will have water each week to put down the recommended 1 inch per week.

