



Conserving Water

Solutions for Your Landscape

UF UNIVERSITY of
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IFAS Extension

<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/water>

Setting Your Irrigation Controller

When water restrictions are in place, it's best to shut off your automatic landscape irrigation controller and run the system manually. Only turn on the system when the grass shows at least one of the three wilt signs. But if you choose to use the automatic setting, follow the simple tips below to conserve water.

Days of the Week to Run

You can set your controller to irrigate every day, every other day, every three days, and so on. Most controllers offer a "custom" option that allows you to select certain days of the week to water, which is the option that should be used during watering restrictions.

Run Time

You can set your controller to water each irrigation zone for a specific amount of time, depending on your system application rate. This information can be found in "Operation of Residential Irrigation Controllers."

Amount of Water

Many factors determine how much water you should apply. You should adjust your controller at least seasonally. For example, irrigation can be cut back during the rainy summer and colder winter months, particularly in North and Central Florida, where lawns and landscape plants go dormant. You should never water to the point of run-off (excess water that your grass's roots can't absorb), as this wastes water, may cause disease, and can contribute to pollution. However, no less than a ½ inch of water should be applied at any one time. Deeper, less frequent watering promotes deep root growth, which contributes to a healthy lawn and landscape capable of surviving dry spells. See "Watering Your Florida Lawn" for more information. For specific irrigation on run times for your irrigation system, see the urban irrigation tool.

Programming Your Controller

Controllers typically have the capacity to run multiple programs. This means that your irrigation controller can be set to water different parts (zones) of your home landscape at different rates. For example, program "A" might have the controller set to water six rotor zones for sixty minutes twice each week. If new plants are planted in a landscape bed, they may need more frequent watering until they are established. In such a case, a second program, program "B," can be used to water that zone every day of the week (water restrictions permitting).

Setting Microirrigation Zones

Microirrigation systems (sometimes called "drip" or "low-volume" irrigation systems) are becoming popular for landscape plants because they are easy to use and can conserve a lot of water. There are several types of microirrigation systems; all deliver water directly to a plant's roots, so that less water is lost to evaporation. Microirrigation systems can be easy to install and can save a homeowner money while keeping landscape plants healthy. For more information on microirrigation of your beds and ornamentals, see "Fertilization and Irrigation Needs for Florida Lawns and Landscapes."

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