Measuring Irrigation Amount
January 19

**Question:** Please tell us how long should the sprinklers water each area when watering once per week as we are now required to do?
- Pat U., e-mail

**Answer:** The length of time to water depends on the needs of your plants and how long it takes for your irrigation system to deliver the recommended amount. In many landscapes, plants of differing water needs are planted along side each other mainly because of inherited practices and not because of horticultural sense. This mix-match often results in sickly over-watered plants next to healthy adequately watered plants. Where we have a monoculture of plant, such as lawns, the recommendation can be more precise. In the case of lawn, apply between ½ to one inch of irrigation water each time the system is activated. This amount will percolate to a depth of about 12 inches and allows the roots to follow course and the lawn to become more drought hardy. To determine how long to run your sprinkler system to apply the desired amount of water, set out coffee cans around the perimeter of the sprinkler system and see how long it takes to fill them to the desired depth. Be sure to check your irrigation system for uniform coverage at the same time.

Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 461-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by e-mailing brownsh@leegov.com. Visit his web page at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/GardenHome.shtml, “Garden Doctor” video clips http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Video.shtml and flowering trees information at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsA_Z.shtml