

## “Solutions for Your Life”



Manatee County Extension Service  
Community Services Department  
1303 17th St. W  
Palmetto, FL 34221  
(941) 722-4524



<http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu>

Agriculture | Lawn & Garden | Commercial Landscape | Families & Consumers | 4-H Youth | Marine Resources | Water

# Timely Tips for Dry May Lawns

Jack Tichenor, University of Florida / Manatee County Extension Service

May is the time of the year when Florida experiences the peak of the dry season. The hot, sunny weather dries out lawns and gardens quickly with little or no rainfall relief in sight. The rainy season usually doesn't begin until June. Additionally, Florida's native sandy soil retains moisture poorly so lawns, gardens, farms and ranches can become very stressed. A well-designed, maintained, and managed irrigation system is critical for the lawns that are not able to survive on rainfall only. Automatic irrigation systems make it easier to deal with the dry season but require periodic inspection, adjustments, and repairs. Following are some tips to make every drop count.

**How Often to Water:** Water established lawns thoroughly but infrequently rather than shallow and often. Watering one day a week encourages deeper rooting and builds drought tolerance. See the UF publication *Let Your Lawn Tell You When to Water* at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep054>.

**How Long to Water:** To determine how long to run sprinklers for proper watering, place empty cans throughout the spray pattern of zone one. Keep track of the time it takes to accumulate an **average** of  $\frac{3}{4}$ " of water in the cans. That should be the run time for that zone. Repeat the process for all other zones. See *Using Your Irrigation Controller for a Better Lawn on Less Water* at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep235>.

**When to Water:** Less water loss occurs from evaporation and wind drift because of the cooler temperatures and lower wind during early morning hours.

**Watch for Wasters:** Look at the sprinkler system while it is operating to locate leaks, broken or misadjusted sprinklers, blocked spray patterns, and overspray onto buildings and paved areas. Correct these problems to trim water waste and help eliminate dry spots in the lawn. See *Basic Repairs & Maintenance for Home Landscape Irrigation Systems* at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ae451>.

**Low Volume Irrigation:** Watering thirsty turf areas with traditional sprinklers separately from shrub beds on low volume irrigation provides a way to save water and improve plant health. Foundation plantings, shrub and flower beds and garden areas can be watered very efficiently by using micro-sprayers, drippers, or drip tubing to put water only at the plant, leaving the unplanted spaces dry. See *Micro-Irrigation, a Guide to the Basics* at <http://watermatters.org> (click on "publications").

### Current Lawn Watering Restrictions

*(unless where you live has stricter rules)*

- Even addresses may water on Thursday and/or Sunday before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.
- Odd addresses may water on Wednesday and/or Saturday before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m.
- Hand watering or micro-irrigation of non-lawn areas is allowed on any day.
- A 60 day establishment period is allowed for new plantings.

For complete water restriction guidelines contact the Southwest Florida Water Management District at 800-423-1476 or at [www.WaterMatters.org](http://www.WaterMatters.org).



Micro Sprayer

For more information or for a schedule of free classes call the number above or go to the website at <http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu/> and click on *Water Conservation Program* on the bottom left side of page.