

lawns
make our world
greener



FLORIDA SOD GROWERS COOPERATIVE
Guide to conservation and sustainability

green grass is good for the environment

Did you know a yard with healthy grass is more than a place for children to play and friends to gather for a Sunday barbecue?

Grass helps to cool the environment, reduces carbon in the air around you and controls erosion. Turf offers unique benefits that can't be duplicated by shrubs and flower beds alone.

GRASS IS:

NATURE'S AIR CONDITIONER On a hot day, lawns will be 30 degrees cooler than asphalt and 14 degrees cooler than bare soil. The front lawns of eight houses have the cooling effect of about 70 tons of air conditioning.

A WATER FILTER Turf lawns reduce stormwater runoff by trapping and filtering water as it percolates through its fibrous root system.

A NOISE REDUCER By absorbing and deflecting sounds, life's a little quieter with a lawn.

AN ALLERGEN TRAP Dust and seasonal pollens that cause allergies first have to get through your grass to get to you.

GREAT FOR THE PLANET 2,500 square feet of lawn absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and releases enough oxygen daily for a family of four to survive.



MAKING EVERY DROP COUNT

Lawns that are irrigated only when they need it develop deep, healthy root systems that help them withstand drought stress and make them less susceptible to pests and diseases.

Your Florida lawn probably doesn't require as much water as you think. By planning your irrigation based on the plant's needs — rather than a day of the week or a pre-set schedule — you can have a healthier, better looking lawn and make every drop count.

Don't just set it and forget it.

Automatic irrigation systems are a great tool when used properly. However, setting the sprinklers to turn on automatically — whether your landscape needs it or not — can waste water and cause lawn problems. Consider switching your system off during Florida's cooler winter months and during the summer rainy season.

Let your lawn tell you when it needs water.

Turn on your sprinklers only when your lawn shows signs of needing water — a grayish color, folded leaf blades and footprints that remain for several minutes. When you do irrigate, set sprinklers to provide about 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch of water per zone.

Rise and shine and water your lawn.

Irrigate early in the day, preferably before sunrise. This helps minimize evaporation loss and limits the time the lawn is wet, which reduces the potential for disease.

Get a rain gauge.

A rain gauge is a simple tool to use when deciding when to water. If 1/2 inch or more rain has recently fallen, empty the gauge, leave your controller off and delay the next watering. Moisture sensors also can be installed to work with existing automatic systems for more optimal irrigation timing.

Mow smart.

A good rule of thumb is not to cut more than one-third the height at any one time. Leave clippings on the lawn and sweep clippings back onto the grass from sidewalks and driveways. These clippings help trap moisture and release nutrients into the soil.

When it comes to your Florida lawn, green is more than just a color.

Do you...

water your lawn twice a week — or less?
know how to tell when your grass is
thirsty?
re-set your sprinklers when the seasons
change?

If you answered yes — way to grow! You're well on your way to having a healthy lawn and doing your part for the planet.

As Florida grows, more people must share the state's natural resources. It has never been more important for homeowners to understand they can use less water to grow great turfgrass.

How to keep your irrigation working its best

- Watch your system run to be sure all sprinkler heads are working and that all zones are covered.
- Repair or replace broken sprinkler heads immediately.
- Prune plants or remove other obstacles blocking spray zones.



STRATEGIES FOR LAWN CARE

Many homeowners who experience lawn problems such as brown spots try more frequent watering or use more fertilizer without really knowing the cause. If the problem is due to disease or pests, that won't help and can make it worse. It's best to first try diagnosing the source.



MORE GREEN IN YOUR POCKET

New irrigation technology can help you keep your lawn looking good and keep more “green” in your pocket.

University of Florida scientists recently conducted a study to see what would happen if automated irrigation systems were monitored to work more in sync with nature.

Here's what they discovered:

Homeowners whose irrigation timers were reset monthly slashed water use up to 30 percent compared with homes that just let the systems run on previous settings. That's enough to fill six swimming pools each year!

Equally important, the yards employing water-saving techniques did not suffer dying plants or brown lawns.

Here's what made a difference:

Soil-moisture sensors hooked up to irrigation systems work to bypass unnecessary irrigation when the weather is rainy or when plants use less water in the winter. Some water management districts and local water authorities offer homeowners incentives to add the new technology — from no-cost irrigation audits to free sensors to water bill credits.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU SAVE?

Properly installed moisture sensors on a well functioning irrigation system can work to cut outdoor water use as much as 50 percent.

If this is the case, these devices could pay for themselves in as little as 1-2 years due to water savings.

A 3-Step Lawn Check-up

- Check to be sure your irrigation system is working correctly.
- If the area is receiving water, check with a reputable lawn care company or your local extension office to diagnose the problem.
- If the problems continue, consider using a different turf type or an alternative ground cover for that space.

Pick a Pro

So you don't “do” lawns? There are many experienced landscape maintenance companies who can assist homeowners. Look for professionals who have the Green Industry Best Management Practices training or have invested in additional training through landscape industry associations.



we've always been green

The Florida Sod Growers Cooperative can show you how to conserve water, save money, do your part to help the environment — and enjoy your lawn. We're experts in all varieties of turf.

ON THE WEB

For information on selecting the right grass for your yard or to ask a sod expert about general turf care and irrigation strategies, go to www.floridalawn.com.

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

For information on the Florida Sod Growers in your region, contact us at:

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About The Florida Sod Growers Cooperative

Florida sod growers are leaders in conservation and best management practices for turf, educating consumers in lawn selection and sensible water use as the path to creating sustainable communities. Founded in 1989, the Florida Sod Growers Cooperative represents more than 130 growers and businesses across the state.

