

When should I start watering my lawn?  
How much water does it need?



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## Iron County Water Stewards

### *Answering Community Questions*

*Get to Know Your H2O: Central Iron County Water Conservancy District appreciates questions submitted by community members about the Pine Valley Water Supply Project and local water needs. As part of its role as steward of water in Cedar Valley, the District is working with a group of experts, community members and elected officials to help prepare viable solutions for the future and to respond to community questions and concerns about emergent water issues.*

*This week's question from the community is answered by Kelly Kopp, Professor and Extension Specialist for the Department of Plants, Soils & Climate at Utah State University, who specializes in turfgrass science.*

### **Question: When should I start watering my lawn? How much water does it need?**

**Answer:** The longer you wait to start irrigating, the deeper your lawn roots will grow which helps promote health and drought tolerance. The Cedar Valley area had a few good rainstorms in April, so soil moisture heading into the growing season should be in good shape.

Waiting until mid-May will certainly pose no risk to your lawn. In Cedar Valley, approximately 28 inches of supplemental irrigation is required to meet the needs of a lawn in a "typical" year. However, this is not likely to be a typical year and we all need to do our part to conserve water. Lawns are very resilient and irrigation can be greatly reduced without killing the grass. It will go dormant, but it will recover in the fall when conditions are cooler and there's more precipitation.

Lawns could be irrigated as little as half an inch per week through the entire growing season without dying. This would take the 28 inches mentioned above down to about 14 inches, saving 50 percent of lawn irrigation water.

Dormant grass is not dead grass. In fact, dormancy is an absolutely normal process for grasses and is similar to what trees do in the fall when they drop their leaves. Grasses are tough! The Utah State University had some research plots last summer that only received a half inch of irrigation *per month*, and in the fall, they recovered just fine.

For those planting lawn, the Turfgrass Water Conservation Alliance has tested and certified many varieties of turfgrass species that use 30 to 40 percent less water than standard varieties. You can go to their website([tgwca.org](http://tgwca.org)) to learn more and locate seed sources. Three waterwise species I can also recommend are buffalograss, blue grama and the fine leaf fescues. Tall fescue can also be very water wise if it has good soils in which roots can grow deep.

To make sure your sprinklers are properly watering your lawn, run them for a short time during the daylight hours and locate any leaks or breaks that need to be fixed before the irrigation season starts. Raise any sunken heads and straighten any tilted heads to improve overall irrigation efficiency. Also, make sure the spray is not being blocked by overgrown plants.

Residents in Cedar Valley who are unsure about irrigation repairs or want to know how much water their lawn needs are encouraged to call (435) 865-9901 to schedule a free Water Check. A trained specialist will come to your home, test your irrigation system and leave you with a customized irrigation schedule. You can also view the Utah Division of Water Resources' weekly lawn watering guide on [conservewater.utah.gov](http://conservewater.utah.gov).

Additionally, lawns should be mowed on the highest setting your mower will allow. This will shade the soil and reduce evaporation of water. Mowing higher also encourages deeper rooting so that the grass can access soil moisture deeper in the soil profile.

During a drought, we should also focus on priority watering. Trees come first as they provide shade and help cool your home. Shrubs should take second priority and perennials third. Turfgrass should be the last priority, because of all the plants in your landscape, grasses are the toughest and will recover when conditions improve.

We can all do our part to make every drop count during a drought, by watering less. For more information on mindful water use, check out [extension.usu.edu](http://extension.usu.edu) and [cicwcd.org](http://cicwcd.org).



Several special interest groups have recently moved their focus to Cedar Valley water and have been spreading misinformation. The Central Iron County Water Conservancy District was created by a vote of Cedar Valley residents more than two decades ago. It has consistently been dedicated to developing and stabilizing the valley's water supply through conservation, recharge, reuse, and importing of water for the benefit of all current and future water users in the region. The District utilizes scientists, experts and professionals to understand the valley's underground aquifer and to determine responsible solutions for the community as it strives to meet local water challenges. For reliable information on the Pine Valley Water Supply Project specifically and the Cedar Valley's water situation in general, please visit <https://cicwcd.org/>. For more detailed information about the Pine Valley Water Supply Project and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, please visit <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/1503915/570>.

