

Don't be a lawn watering dummy

(Modified from a Southern Living "Grumpy Gardner" article by Steve Bender)

Nothing is stupider than the way people water their yards. People water too much, too often, at the wrong times, and the wrong way. Not only does this waste a valuable and increasingly scarce resource, it also makes your lawn look worse by increasing disease, insect, and thatch problems. How many of the following have you seen in your neighborhood?

Stupid Lawn Tricks

Using sprinklers in the blazing hot sun. Hello? Using sprinklers when it's sunny and 95 degrees is dumber than swimming with polar bears. Practically all the water applied will evaporate into the hot air before ever reaching the roots. You might as well water the storm drain.

Using sprinklers when it's raining. Most people guilty of this use in-ground sprinklers set by a timer. Having to eat boiled yak every day for a year is not too harsh a punishment.

Using sprinklers to water the street. Again, in-ground sprinklers are the culprit. People set them to go off in the middle of the night and never see where the sprinklers are pointed. As I've said before, you can water asphalt all you want, but that stuff just ain't gonna grow.

Giving your flowers, shrubs, and trees the same amount of water that you give your grass. Different plants have different water requirements. Treating them all the same means one will be happy and the others will hate you. Who practices such idiocy more often than anybody else? Owners of in-ground sprinkler systems.

Watering the grass every single day for 15 minutes. This turns the lawn into a shallow-rooted water junkie that demands a water fix every day just to soldier on. Instead of watering shallowly every day for 15 minutes, water deeply once a week for an hour or so (or how ever long it takes to apply an inch of water). You can also look into treating your water if you are a fanatic like me, check out some Water Softener Reviews, your grass will never be greener. Your lawn will be healthier and more drought-tolerant. It will also have fewer loathsome weeds like dollarweed and nutgrass (nutsedge) that thrive in overwatered lawns.



Let's All Water Less

Pure, fresh water is fundamental to human life, yet we waste it in so many ways -- from building humongous, bloated desert cities like Phoenix and Las Vegas that have to capture their water from distant rivers to average folks who overwater their grass. So how can you have a nice lawn while using a modicum of water?

- Don't make the lawn bigger than you need. Devote more area to natural areas and drought-tolerant plants and ground covers. Watch your water bill shrink.
- Choose a grass well-adapted to your region.
- Water at the right time. The best time to water is very early morning before it gets hot. Most of the water will make it to the roots. Plus, the grass blades will dry quickly, preventing disease problems.
- Don't mow your grass during droughts. Cut grass loses lots of moisture through cut blades and turns brown if you don't water it. So don't cut. Grumpy's rule during hot, dry summers is, don't cut the grass until it rains two days in a row.
- Cut your grass at the highest recommended height for your grass. Taller grass shades and cools the ground, reducing moisture loss. In a drought, taller grass always stays greener longer than shorter grass. For example, cut St. Augustine at 3 to 4 inches, and Zoysia at 2 inches.
- If you don't have in-ground sprinklers, don't get them. People with sprinkler systems always use more water because watering is so easy. You don't have to drag hoses. You just set the timer and forget it.