

May 31, 2017



Got Lawn?

By Sarah Robinson

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

After the abundant rains this winter, many of us who have kept some area of grassy lawn in our landscapes are enjoying the deep green color. Despite living in a Mediterranean climate, which typically has no rainfall from May through October, we would like to maintain these areas. Whether the lawn is for a swing set, pets, picnics, or to enhance a view, we will have to water our lawns over the summer. The winter rains have allowed our turf to establish deep roots; now is the time to keep the roots deep, the grass green, and use less water. Sound good?

The key to deeper roots is to retain the moisture in the soil to a depth of 6-8 inches. Light sprinkling will encourage root development only near the soil surface and stunt deeper root growth. Shallow root systems require frequent watering to keep the surface wet, creating an ideal environment for weeds and diseases.

The top 6-8 inches of soil can be compared to a sponge. As temperatures rise, the upper crust of the soil dries out. If you have a dry sponge and pour a cup of water over it, most of the water simply runs off. The sponge will only absorb a small amount of water. If you take the same cup of water and mist it onto the sponge over a longer period of time, all of the water can be absorbed, saturating the sponge. You can water your lawn in a similar manner.

Most irrigation control systems allow you to set run times and to repeat a run multiple times in one day. If you normally water your lawn for a 20 minute interval, break this 20 minute run time into 4 runs at 5 minutes. Let the area being watered rest for 60 minutes after each 5 minute run. By watering for a shorter period of time and allowing time for the soil to absorb the water, the soil can retain more water. This is like misting a sponge. Using this method, you should be able to cut back the amount of water used each week.

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“Too much water is not only wasteful but can also increase turf growth, which requires more frequent mowing. Saturated soil can cause poor soil aeration and, as a result, weaken turf making it vulnerable to diseases and invasions of weeds. Not enough water can cause turf to dry out. Let the soil partially dry out between watering. Water when the top two inches of soil have dried out. Use an object such as a screwdriver to probe your soil and measure the depth of the moisture.”
For more information: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/TOOLS/TURF/>

Join us for a “Summer Pruning Demonstration” with Master Gardeners Pam Lane and Bill Curtaz. They discuss pruning safety, disease control during pruning, and summer pruning to keep our fruit trees low. Shorter trees lend to easier tending — a much better experience for the home gardener! Saturday, June 3 from 9am to noon at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Drive, Placerville. The class is free but Folsom Lake College will be charging \$2/car parking on all days starting in June.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at [http://ucanr.edu/mastergardener e-news](http://ucanr.edu/mastergardener-e-news). You can also find us on Facebook.