

Water Requirements of Landscape Plants in the Summer

In New England Climates, landscape plantings are becoming more and more irrigated due to the uncertainty of rain. The change of seasons greatly affects the irrigation requirements of these plantings, as well. Irrigation clock settings should be adjusted seasonally to promote plant health, to conserve water, and to reduce the likelihood of root diseases.

Water-use requirements for plants in outdoor landscapes vary greatly by season, and are often expressed as an inch per week in the summer. In autumn and spring, water-use of about a quarter inch to half an inch per week would be typical. The seasonal changes in water needs suggest irrigation settings should be altered at least 2-3 times per year.

The tendency in most residential landscapes, however, is to over-irrigate rather than under-irrigate. Too much water can cause the growth of fungi and various mold groups. Changing the frequency of irrigation, rather than its duration, is preferable for making seasonal adjustments. Every irrigation system should wet the soil to the depth of plants' roots, if possible. Run-times may need to be increased in summer, during extended periods of high temperatures. Of course, we recognize that many other factors may affect how we manage irrigation at home, not the least of which is system design.

Too often I drive by a property in the pouring rain and see that the irrigation system is up and running. If you don't already have a rain sensor on your existing system, do yourself a favor and invest in one. It will save your plants and conserve a valuable recourse.

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