

Efficiently Irrigate Your Way to a Healthy, Green Lawn

When summer rolls around in Iowa, people feel like drinking a lot more water, so it might not come as a surprise that water usage in West Des Moines doubles and even triples in the big summer months. While some of this extra usage goes to quenching thirst, the lion's share goes to lawns.

In those hot summer months, watering your lawn is essential to keeping it fresh and green. As a result, one-third of the new homes built in our community are equipped with irrigation systems.

Despite their consumption, irrigation systems are efficient, providing that you use proper pressure settings, place sprinkler heads in appropriate locations (so they don't water the sidewalk or your house), and maintain the system with regular inspection and testing.

"Irrigation systems are quite useful in managing the health of your lawn, but, as with anything else, it's important to employ common sense when installing and using them," said Jerry Stevens, General Manager of West Des Moines Water Works. "For example, you'll need to comply with several state and city ordinances before you can turn on the water."



An underground irrigation system, shown here in the process of installation, can be an efficient way to water.

State and City Ordinances

One such ordinance requires all built-in irrigation systems to have a backflow prevention device installed. This device protects your home's drinking water from any contamination that might result from a cross



Early morning is the best time to water, as winds are generally calm, and less water evaporates in the cool air.

connection. In addition, you need to prepare space for a meter in a heated area adjacent to where the water service pipe enters your home, preferably near a floor drain.

Once you have set up the system, call the West Des Moines Water Works, and we will send a technician to install a water meter and an electronic reading device at no charge.

Water Supply Connection Fees

Whether you install an underground irrigation system or a separate meter for outside faucets with portable sprinklers, you must pay a one-time Water Supply Connection Fee. For outside faucets, the fee is \$460. For an underground irrigation system, the fee is based on the square footage of the irrigation area and the average rainfall rate (measured in inches per hour).

The connection fee takes into account the additional water volume delivered to your home or business and pays for a portion of the capital improvements necessary to support the increased demands that irrigation places on the overall water system.

"We realize nobody likes to hear about additional fees, especially in this kind of economy" notes Stevens, "but without them, everyone, even those who don't use any water for lawn care, would end up paying more for basic water services."

By following these simple guidelines, you can make sure that your irrigation system is set up properly and is ready for the summer months ahead. For more information, check out the Frequently Asked Questions link at wdmww.com.

See the back page for advice on how to conserve while watering.

DID YOU KNOW



Allowing your lawn to start to undergo mild drought stress will actually increase rooting, making your lawn stronger in the long run.

Visit <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/lawntalk/lawntalk08.html> for more information.

12 Easy Ways to Avoid Wasting Water and Money

Once you have properly installed your irrigation system and paid the necessary fee, you will want to make sure that your system is operating efficiently.

The guidelines below will help you prevent waste and avoid higher than expected water bills.



Avoid watering the sidewalk and wasting water.

1. Water your lawn before 10 a.m. Cooler temperatures minimize evaporation, and lighter winds carry less water away.
2. Turn your sprinklers off when it's raining or install a rain shut-off device with your irrigation system.
3. Avoid watering when winds are strong.
4. Regularly inspect your system for leaks, broken sprinkler heads and other potential problems.
5. Group plants by their water needs. For example, grass should be watered separately from shrubs, trees and flowers.
6. Drip irrigation systems use less water and are more effective for trees, shrubs and flowers.
7. Use water efficient devices like soaker hoses and trickle systems.
8. Adjust your lawn mower to cut at a higher setting. Longer grass shades root systems and holds soil moisture better than a closely clipped lawn.
9. Place sprinkler heads so they spread water uniformly across the entire lawn, and make sure they water only vegetation—not buildings and pavement.
10. Avoid short, frequent watering sessions. This shallow watering encourages a shallow root system, which makes the lawn more susceptible to drought and grub damage.
11. Watering too deeply should also be avoided. Water that percolates below the root zone is wasted.
12. Only water your lawn when necessary. An easy way to check this is by simply walking across your lawn—if you leave footprints, it's time to water.

In a Pinch? WDMWW Offers Payment Arrangements

Water is one of life's essential needs, regardless of economy. At West Des Moines Water Works, we understand that today's economic climate may present challenges to some of our customers. While we encourage timely payments with services such as automatic withdrawal and online bill pay, we recognize some customers may need extra help in these trying times to keep water flowing.

We offer payment arrangements for any customer with a solid payment history who faces a unique finan-

cial situation in any given month. If you're in need of extra time, call the West Des Moines Water Works at 222-3460, and a customer service representative may be able to assist you by making a payment arrangement. You will be responsible for paying the amount due within a short time.

To help you keep track of your municipal services bill payment, the chart below details the West Des Moines Water Works billing and collection schedule.

TIMELINE	PAYMENT STATUS	LATE PAYMENT FEES
Day 1	Billing date (1 st month's bill)	
Day 21	Bill due	
Day 28	Late Payment Notice mailed	1.5% of bill (\$1.50 minimum)
Day 30-37	Billing date (2 nd month's bill)	
Day 43	24-hour Final Notice delivered	\$7.50
Day 45	Water Shut Off/Shut Off Notice delivered	\$15.00

You can be green as a freshly watered lawn by viewing and paying for your bill online at www.wdmww.com

WEST DES MOINES WATER WORKS 4200 Mills Civic Parkway 515-222-3460 fax 515-222-3378 www.wdmww.com
 WATER TREATMENT AND DISTRIBUTION 1505 Railroad Avenue 515-222-3465 fax 515-222-3469 TDD 515-222-3334

WEST DES MOINES WATER WORKS E-PAY: WDMWW.COM



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