

Salt Lake County Watering Standards



WATERING PRACTICES

- **Wait to Water:** Delay the start of outdoor watering until mid-May whenever possible.
- **Adjust for Weather:** Skip watering during or after rainfall and scale back watering in cooler or overcast periods.
- **Evening Hours Only:** Water between 8 P.M. and 7 A.M. to reduce evaporation. *(As operations allow)*
- **Weekly Monitoring:** Inspect sprinklers weekly to ensure water is hitting plants not: sidewalks, roads, or parking lots. *(As operations allow)*
- **Broom, Not a Hose:** Use a broom or leaf blower to clean walkways and parking lots. Sweep dirt into turf areas rather than washing it away.
- **Cycle & Soak:** Divide the total run time into shorter cycles with 30 minutes between each. This allows soil to absorb water more effectively and reduces runoff.



WATERING TIME GUIDE

This watering schedule serves as a general starting point and may need adjustment based on property location, soil type, and drought conditions. For best results, turn irrigation systems on in mid-May and off in early October.

WATERING TREES




Give trees consistent, deep watering, especially if any turf removed. Water trees at the dripline, the outer edge of the canopy, instead of at the trunk.

MOWING

Follow the one-third rule: avoid removing more than one-third of the grass blade at a time. For example, if grass is 4–5 inches tall, mow off only 1–1.5 inches. Increasing frequency of mowing can also support healthy turf.



HOW OFTEN?	CLAY SOIL	SANDY SOIL	HOW LONG?	CLAY SOIL	SANDY SOIL
Mother's Day Start Watering May 10 th	Once every 5 Days	Once Every 3 Days	 ROTATING	45 Minutes Total	25 Minutes Total
Father's Day June 21 st	Once Every 3 Days	Once Every 2 Days		 FIXED	25 Minutes Total
Labor Day Sept. 21 st	Once Every 5 Days	Once Every 3 Days			
Indigenous People's Day Oct. 12 th	Stop Watering				

Source: conservationgardenpark.org

These standards are subject to change at the discretion of the Mayor's administration based on current water conditions.

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TEST & INSPECT

Water systems constantly break due to aging infrastructure, people, and flora growth. Periodically run sprinkler systems to make sure they are functioning properly and adequately watering the space. Leaks can also be a major source of water consumption that can lead to increased costs and inefficient water use.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

- Water spraying onto concrete or roads
- Sunken, broken or missing sprinkler
- Consistent pressure and head type
- Soft spots in turf can indicate leaks
- Improper draining (*Check your valves!*)



WATER SMARTER

Smart irrigation controllers adjust watering in response to actual weather and the needs of your landscape, helping cut down on waste while keeping plants healthier.



- Control systems will often track usage and can help support leak detection.
- Check the control system master record weekly for leaks, inconsistencies, and other irregularities to ensure normal watering operations.
- Smart controller rebates are available for commercial and for residential use. *See more resources!*



COMMON QUESTIONS

1

What happens if a property can't follow the "Wait to Water" dates because of operational needs?

Watering decisions are at the discretion of individual agencies, as they are best positioned to understand their operational needs; these guidelines are intended for general use.

2

Are there recommended drought-tolerant plants or turf alternatives?

Yes, please see the [Flip the Strip Guidebook](#) under more resources!

3

Can you train your grass or turf to use less water?

Absolutely! Training your grass is like building muscle. Water deeply and less often, and the roots grow down to where water is available, making your lawn tougher, greener, and less thirsty.

**NEED MORE INFO?
CHECK OUT MORE
RESOURCES HERE!**



Salt Lake County Watering Checklist



PRESEASON (MARCH-APRIL)

- Check watering control box or applicable technology for normal operation
- Setup watering days & times within controller
- Check sprinklers for damage, sunken heads, clogs, etc.
- Check irrigation lines for clogs and correct placement (*Near flora*)
- Inspect backflow preventer for cracks, leaks, or freeze damage
- Check any outdoor restrooms and preform testing to identify leaks
 - If leaks exist conduct any plumbing repairs
- Conduct walks around property to identify any irrigation line breaks
- Depending on size of irrigation systems a 24 hour period may be needed to ensure equalized pressure



Clogged sprinklers can cause pooling and inefficient watering

MOTHERS DAY - WATERING BEGINS



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MONTHLY SPRINKLER MAINTENANCE (MAY-SEPTEMBER)

- Monitor system for stuck valves during first full operation
- Continue head checks weekly to monthly (*site-dependent*)
- Assign daily irrigation attention for high-need locations
- Look for overspray or water hitting sidewalks, roads, driveways or non-flora
- Cut or trim vegetation that may block or impede sprinklers
- Check sprinkler heads that may be tilted, broken, clogged and or buried
- Conduct periodic walks across property to detect inefficient watering
- Look for soft spots in turf or soil that may indicate underground leaks
- Check sprinkler heads for consistent spray patterns or damage and replace heads to maintain similar head style

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY - WATERING STOPS



**TURN
IT
OFF**

Salt Lake County Watering Checklist



WINTERIZE (OCTOBER)

- Turn off water supply
- Drain any backflow devices according to manufacturer
- Shutoff timers, control boxes or smart controllers
- Insulate or cover any exposed pipes or equipment (*as needed*)
- Remove or insulate any moisture sensors
- Drain irrigation lines and open drain valves.
If needed use an air compressor to clear lines.



Freezing within irrigation pipes can lead to costly repairs and dangerous conditions.



Drip lines are extremely efficient at watering small, targeted areas!

Have Drip irrigation?

- Preseason: Flush systems to remove debris (*repeat if needed*)
- Preseason: Change any filters or emitters that are damaged or may prevent proper flow
- Preseason: Walk along lines for signs of tubing damage or kinks
- Charge systems and ensure that lines are free of any debris or blockages
- Check throughout the season blockages, damage or pressure issues
 - Check emitters for mineral buildup
- Winterize: drain systems of any water to prevent line splitting
- Winterize: Use air compressor to clear lines (*if necessary*)



ITEMS TO CONSIDER

- What common issues lead to unnecessary water loss?**

Routine checks on systems and environment are essential. Sprinkler heads are often stepped on or damaged leading to reduced pressure and increased usage.

- What should I do if standards conflict with operational needs?**

These are general operating standards, but certain landscapes need more or less watering depending on soil, flora, drainage etc. Ensure that watering is uniform and discuss with your team on appropriate solutions!

- The grass is yellow, does that mean its dead?!**

Nope! Grass naturally turns yellow in the summer, especially during heat, drought, or stress, and it doesn't automatically mean it's dying. Grass goes dormant in heat to conserve energy until conditions improve.



Damaged lines or heads can lead to increased usage.