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## **Top 5 North Texas Watering Questions Revealed**

*North Texas Municipal Water District helps residents save water, yards and money*

WYLIE, Texas — With nearly 1,000 residents visiting North Texas Municipal Water District's (NTMWD) "Grass Roots" outreach events this summer, residents had some serious questions about saving their lawns and conserving water in this extreme heat.

Here are the top five most common questions posed to Dr. Ben Wherley, assistant research scientist with Texas AgriLife Research, who is a featured agronomist at the NTMWD water conservation booth.

### **1. How much water does my lawn need?**

Approximately 1 inch of water a week is the amount of water (rainfall plus irrigation) that warm-season lawns require in north-central Texas during summer months (June, July and August).

### **2. How do I know if I am applying the right amount of water to my lawn?**

Ideally, you want to apply enough water so that the soil is moistened to a depth of 4 to 6 inches following irrigation. For North Texas' clay soil, homeowners can accomplish this with about 1 inch of water. To determine how long it takes to apply 1 inch, place rain gauges or empty tuna cans around your lawn and measure the depth of irrigation applied over a given time period.

How you water is important if you're trying to save water and maintain a healthy lawn. Irrigating incorrectly will promote a weak, shallow-rooted turf. Residents should water deeply and infrequently to promote a deeper-rooted and healthier lawn.

- **Water Deeply:** Use the "cycle and soak" method, watering in multiple cycles, instead of just one. This is especially important in our clay soils or for zones in your lawn that are moderately sloped. For example, if you wish to run a zone for 20 minutes, but you notice that runoff begins to occur after 5 minutes, you may want to break the program into four 5-minute cycles with 10-minute soak periods between each cycle. This allows the water to settle into the ground and prevents wasteful runoff.
- **Water Infrequently:** About once to twice per week according to your local watering schedule.

An hour or two following irrigating, you can use a soil probe to remove and view a soil sample from your yard to see how dry or moist it is. You are watering correctly if it is moist to a depth of 4 to 6 inches following irrigation. Or, take an 8-inch-long screwdriver and insert it into the ground. Once you hit hard soil, you have found the depth you are watering to. Be careful to avoid irrigation or utility lines when checking soil moisture.

(more)

### **3. What are some drought tolerant grasses for this climate? Will they do well at my home?**

Bermudagrass, buffalograss, St. Augustinegrass and zoysiagrass are species that all show very good drought tolerance. However, bermudagrass and buffalograss are limited by shade. Buffalograss does not hold up well in yards receiving a lot of traffic and wear. Extreme winter temperatures may cause loss of or thinning of St. Augustinegrass lawns.

### **4. What are some things I can do to decrease the amount of water needed for my lawn?**

Begin by planting drought-tolerant species and varieties (mentioned above), but wait until cooler weather and the current drought has passed before establishing new landscaping. Mow your lawn at the highest recommended height for the species (normally about 3 inches), which encourages production of a deeper root system. Have your soil tested, and apply adequate fertilizer based on those results. Many homeowners unnecessarily apply fertilizers containing phosphorous and potassium, which may already be available in adequate or excessive amounts in your soil naturally. Many universities have soil test labs where you can mail in a sample. Finally, water as deeply and infrequently as possible, and avoid irrigating until you begin to notice the onset of wilt in your lawn (purplish-gray coloration, rolled up leaf blades).

### **5. What grass species can I plant in shade?**

Zoysiagrass has good shade tolerance, and St. Augustinegrass has excellent, shade tolerance.

### **Meet the Agronomists**

NTMWD invites residents to visit the Water IQ "Grass Roots" booth to meet with turf and water experts. Upcoming events are at the Rockwall Farmers Market on August 20, the Healthy Living Expo in Garland on September 24, and Recycling Is Fun Day in McKinney on October 3. Residents have the chance to win prizes, including reusable water bottles and a Water IQ home makeover kit featuring water-saving and low-flow devices.

### **About North Texas Municipal Water District**

NTMWD directly serves the following cities and/or water supply agencies: Allen, Farmersville, Forney, Frisco, Garland, Mesquite, McKinney, Plano, Princeton, Richardson, Royse City, Rockwall, Wylie, Bonham, Caddo Basin S.U.D., Cash W.S.C., College Mound W.S.C., Copeville S.U.D., East Fork S.U.D., Fairview, Fate, Forney Lake W.S.C., Gastonia-Scurry S.U.D., Greater Texoma Utility Authority, Josephine, Kaufman, Kaufman Four-One, Lavon W.S.C., Little Elm, Lucas, Melissa, Milligan W.S.C., Mt. Zion W.S.C., Murphy, Nevada W.S.C., North Collin W.S.C., Parker, Prosper, Rose Hill S.U.D., Rowlett, Sachse, Seis Lagos M.U.D., Sunnyvale, Terrell and Wylie Northeast S.U.D.

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