

Watering Guide For New Plantings

General Guidelines:

- Check the soil to determine if watering is necessary. Overwatering is just as deadly as underwatering, because it can cause root rot or mold.
- Morning is the best time to water. If you water during the heat of the day much of the water evaporates before the plant can utilize it. Watering near/after dusk can promote foliar diseases.
- Watering is dependant on soil type. Sandy soil retains the least amount of water and clay retains the most. Adjust your watering schedule accordingly.
- Deep watering over a longer period of time is better for plant development than light watering. It encourages deeper root growth allowing for a stronger and healthier root system.
- All plants experience some transplant shock after planting. This is a normal process and should be expected. Some leaves could turn brown and may even drop.
- Once new plantings are established, you can customize a watering schedule to fit your personal preferences. Native plantings will survive without routine watering, even during periods of drought. Plants may become semi-dormant or slightly wilted, but will bounce back. If you do choose to water on a routine basis, 1" per week is recommended for most plants, including turfgrass.

Trees & Shrubs:

If planted in spring or summer, water approximately 3 times per week, totaling 1"-2", for two months or until the end of summer. If planted in the fall, water for two months or until the ground freezes. Be sure that trees/shrubs are thoroughly soaked right before the ground freezes. This will help them survive through the winter.

Seeded Prairie:

A seeded prairie does not require water to become established; however, watering does speed up germination. If you decide to water your prairie, it is recommended that you keep the seed bed moist for 3-6 weeks after installation.

Perennial Plugs:

During the first growing season, plants should be watered about every 2-3 days, totaling approximately 1" of water per week. A good way to determine if watering is necessary is to choose an "indicator" plant, for example, *Ratibida pinnata* (Yellow Coneflower) is one of the first plants in your prairie that will need water. When you notice its leaves curling, you may want to water the entire planting. You can also check by sticking your finger in the soil; it should be moist an inch down. If it's not, you should water the entire planting.

Seeded Lawn:

The seed bed must be kept moist for the first 4-6 weeks to maximize germination, watering at least once a day for 30 minutes. Try not to walk on newly seeded areas for the first month. Wait as long as possible before the first mowing, letting the grass grow 3"-4". Set the mower height to a high setting, preferably 2½"-3½" and, if possible, collect the clippings to prevent the grass from suffocating.

No-Mow Seeded Lawn:

The seed bed must be kept moist for the first 4-6 weeks to maximize germination, watering at least once a day for 30 minutes. Try not to walk on newly seeded areas for the first month. Wait as long as possible before the first mowing, letting the grass grow 3"-4". Set the mower height to a high setting, preferably 2½"-3½" and, if possible, collect the clippings to prevent the grass from suffocating. During the first season, mowing once the grass reaches 4" will help remove weeds early on, but this only needs to be done the first few times.

In the following seasons, if a "natural look" is desired, mow once when the grass is 4" tall and seedheads appear; this should be the only mowing required. If a "manicured look" is desired, mow once a month to a height of 3"-4" starting in spring. Do not mow short late in the season after it has been allowed to grow to its full natural height; this will severely harm the turf and create an unsightly appearance.

Sodded Lawn:

For the first 7-10 days after sodding, your lawn requires a lot of water, often more than once a day. If the sod dries out, the strips will shrink and never return to original size, which will create gaps between the strips. Water must reach the soil under the sod, which can be checked by lifting the corner of a strip. After 10 days, or when the roots are well knit into the soil, you can reduce water to 1" per week. Root growth can be tested by lifting a corner of the sod to check if the roots are growing into the topsoil. Traffic should be kept to a minimum for at least the first month. Wait as long as possible before the first mowing, letting the grass grow 3"-4". Set the mower height to a high setting, preferably 2½"-3½" and, if possible, collect the clippings to prevent the sod from suffocating.

