

Frequently Asked Questions About Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures and the South Florida Water Management District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program

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Residents should always check with their city and county governments to determine if local landscape irrigation ordinances are in place. To determine watering days and times in your area, contact your local government or visit www.sfwmd.gov/2days.

Q: What is the District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program?

A: In September 2008, the South Florida Water Management District adopted a Comprehensive Water Conservation Program to protect South Florida's water resources and help ensure sustainable water supplies by developing a lasting water conservation ethic throughout South Florida. The District is promoting water conservation for its many benefits in meeting the growing demands on the region's limited water supply.

The Comprehensive Water Conservation Program fosters a conservation culture with regulatory, voluntary and financial incentives, as well as education and marketing strategies. All of the components of the program are designed to build on and complement successful water conservation initiatives at the local, state and national levels. The dynamic and flexible program is designed to also evolve with any changes in Florida law and the District's progress in environmental restoration. Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures are one component of the program.

Q: What are the District Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures in South Florida?

A: Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures include a rule establishing a two-day-a-week landscape watering schedule throughout the District, with a three-day-a-week provision for users in some counties.

Conservation measures were developed with input from water users across the region over a series of public workshops and meetings of the District's Water Resources Advisory Commission work group. The Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule applies when the source of water for irrigation is a utility, lake, pond, canal or well.

Under the conservation measures, local governments across the region have the flexibility to adopt alternative landscape irrigation ordinances at their discretion, based on local water demands, system limitations or resource availability. Because

several counties and cities have exercised this option, **residents should always check local ordinances for watering days and times in their area.**

2-Day-A-Week Watering

(In the portions of Charlotte, Highlands, Okeechobee, Orange, Osceola and Polk counties within SFWMD boundaries.)

UNLESS LOCAL LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION ORDINANCES ARE IN PLACE, the District Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule limits lawn and landscape watering to two days per week.

- Residents and businesses with an **odd-numbered** street address may water lawns and landscapes on **Wednesdays and/or Saturdays, only before 10 a.m. OR after 4 p.m.**
- Residents and businesses with an **even-numbered** street address, **no street address** or those that **irrigate both even and odd addresses** within the same zones, which may include multi-family units and homeowners associations, may water lawns and landscapes on **Thursdays and/or Sundays, only before 10 a.m. OR after 4 p.m.**

3-Day-A-Week Watering Option

(Broward, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties)

UNLESS LOCAL LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION ORDINANCES ARE IN PLACE, the District Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule allows a three-day-a-week watering provision for users who reside in counties located wholly within District boundaries. Users in these counties may water lawns and landscapes on two days or may exercise the option and irrigate a third day.

- Residents and businesses with an **odd-numbered** street address may water lawns and landscapes on **Mondays, Wednesdays and/or Saturdays, only before 10 a.m. OR after 4 p.m.**
- Residents and businesses with an **even-numbered** street address **no street address** or those that **irrigate both even and odd addresses** within the same zones, which may include multi-family units and homeowners associations, may water lawns and landscapes on **Tuesdays, Thursdays and/or Sundays, only before 10 a.m. OR after 4 p.m.**

More information about Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures, including links to local government websites, is available online at:
www.sfwmd.gov/2days.

Q: Does the District Year-Round Irrigation Rule allow additional watering days and times for irrigating newly planted lawns and landscaping?

A: Yes. UNLESS LOCAL LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION ORDINANCES ARE IN PLACE, the District Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule allows watering for up to 90 days following the installation of new lawns and landscaping.

- On the day new landscaping is installed, new plantings and the soil may be irrigated once without regard to the normally allowable watering days and times. Soil irrigation is also allowed immediately prior to planting.
- New plantings that have been in place for **30 days or less** may be watered on **Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and/or Sundays**, only **before 10 a.m. and/or after 4 p.m.**
- New plantings that have been in place from **31 to 90 days** may be watered on **Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and/or Saturdays**, only **before 10 a.m. and/or after 4 p.m.**
- Irrigation is limited to the areas containing new landscaping only. An entire irrigation zone may be watered only if new landscaping is planted on at least 50 percent of that zone. If new landscaping is planted on less than 50 percent of an irrigation zone, only the new plantings may be watered.

Q: Have any of the cities and counties within the District established local landscape irrigation ordinances?

A: Yes. Residents should always check with their city and county governments to determine if local landscape irrigation ordinances are in place. In some areas, local ordinances differ from the District rule. To determine watering days and times in your area, contact your local government or visit www.sfwmd.gov/2days.

Q: Are there any types of irrigation methods that are exempt from District Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures?

A: Yes. Low-volume hand-watering, low-volume irrigation, micro-irrigation, and irrigation with water from a rain barrel, cistern or other rain-harvesting device is allowed at any time. A voluntary reduction in use is encouraged, and landscape irrigation using these systems should not produce water runoff.

- *Low-volume hand-watering* - using a hose with an attached automatic shut-off or trigger nozzle.
- *Low-volume irrigation* - using equipment and devices specifically designed to deliver the smallest amount of water needed by the plant being irrigated and to put the water in the plant's root zone.
- *Micro-irrigation* - delivering small amounts of water on or below the soil surface. Drops or tiny streams of water spray through emitters or applicators placed along a water delivery line. This includes bubbler, drip, trickle, mist or microspray, and subsurface irrigation methods.
- *Rainwater harvesting* - the collection and storing of rainwater for irrigation or other non-potable uses. In typical residential applications, roof catchment systems channel rainwater into onsite storage (usually cisterns or rain barrels) via the home's system of gutters and pipes.

Q: Are there any limits in the District Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule for residents and businesses using reclaimed water and/or supplemented reclaimed water for irrigation?

A: No. Within the jurisdictional boundaries of the SFWMD, water from a reclaimed water system can be used anytime. To promote the most efficient use of this resource, the District encourages reclaimed users to irrigate lawns and landscapes **before 10 a.m. OR after 4 p.m.**, and to apply no more than three-quarters to an inch of water per week and/or operate irrigation systems for no more than 30 minutes per zone.

- *Reclaimed water* is produced by thoroughly treating the liquids collected at waste water treatment plants.
- *Supplemented reclaimed water* is reclaimed water which has been augmented with groundwater or surface water by a public or private water supply utility.
- *Reclaimed and supplemented reclaimed water* is not meant for drinking and is used almost exclusively for irrigation. Both types of water are usually transferred through purple pipes.

Q: Are District Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures mandatory?

A: Yes. Irrigation landscape limits are mandatory and are enforced by the South Florida Water Management District, local governments and law enforcement agencies. Residential fines are set by the local government and vary, but typically range from \$25 to \$125 for a first offense.

Q: Can I apply for permission to change my watering days or times under the District Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Rule?

A: Yes. Under certain conditions, you may request from the District an alternative irrigation schedule. The District may grant variances for users of “smart” irrigation technologies described in Senate Bill 494, passed by the Florida Legislature in 2009.

Cities and counties that have adopted landscape irrigation ordinances also have a process for requesting an alternative irrigation schedule. For more information, contact your local government.

Q: Why are Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures an important component of the District’s Comprehensive Water Conservation Program?

A: Measures in the District’s Comprehensive Water Conservation Program, including year-round watering limits, are designed to accomplish a measurable change in water use. Consider that:

- Up to one-half of all potable water produced in our region goes to outdoor irrigation.
- More than 50 percent of the water applied to lawns may be lost to evaporation or run-off because of over-watering.

- Improved irrigation efficiency enhances landscape quality; helps to stretch local water supplies; and helps protect and sustain local water resources for area residents and the environment.
- The potential water savings from Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures is substantial. Due to similar measures in place during the recent water shortage, a total savings of 138.8 million gallons of water per day was achieved in seven counties alone over a six-month period.

Q: Are there other components to the South Florida Water Management District's Comprehensive Water Conservation Program?

A: Yes. Components and key strategies of the plan include:

- Goal-based conservation planning, implementation and improved reporting for large, permitted water users.
- Conservation-based rate structures for utilities designed to encourage water savings and discourage high-volume use.
- The retrofitting of outdated, water-guzzling plumbing devices. Adopting and incorporating Florida-friendly landscaping principles.
- Water conservation education strategies, including classroom education, social marketing and professional development.
- A call for governments and large users to lead by example.

Q: How much water does a lawn or landscape need?

A: Proper irrigation is based on the amount of water each lawn needs. Lawns and landscapes typically need to receive only three-quarters to an inch of water each week. The lawn may not need to be watered at all if it has rained during the week. Most shrubs and trees do not need any supplemental irrigation once they are established in the landscape.

More information about Year-Round Landscape Irrigation Conservation Measures and the District landscape irrigation conservation rule, plus links to local government websites, is online at: www.sfwmd.gov/2days.