

HOME DECOR & MORE



Poorly placed sprinklers that shoot water out onto driveways and other surfaces that do not need water can rob a lawn of water it desperately needs when temperatures climb in the summertime.

Watering Tips to Produce Healthy Lawns

Summer is a season for landscaping, and homeowners who live in regions that get especially hot in the summertime often worry that their lawns won't make it through the dog days of summer looking lush. But lawns don't have to succumb to the sizzling summer sun. Oftentimes, the right watering strategies can help homeowners nurse their lawns through the hottest months of the year, ensuring the lawns make it to autumn looking as green as they did back at the height of spring.

- Reconsider when you're watering. Come summertime, homeowners may want a glass of water at high noon, when temperatures seem to be at their hottest. But you and your lawn are different, so the best time to satiate your thirst is not necessarily the best time to water your lawn. Watering in the middle of the day is often ineffective, as water tends to evaporate quickly in the afternoons when temperatures are peaking. Nighttime watering can contribute to the growth of fungus, which can create an entirely new set of headaches for homeowners. Morning watering sessions tend to be most effective during the summertime, as temperatures tend to be cooler in the morning, leading to less evaporation. Less evaporation

means all that watering isn't going to waste.

- Reconsider your sprinkler. If you can't afford an in-ground irrigation system, which many landscaping professionals feel is the most effective and efficient way to water a lawn, then you likely will rely on a sprinkler to keep your lawn looking lush through the summer months. When choosing a sprinkler, look for one that shoots water out horizontally as opposed to vertically. A vertical sprinkler system is more vulnerable to wind and evaporation than one that shoots water out horizontally, so make sure your sprinkler system is sending water into your lawn and not into summer breezes.

- Avoid overwatering. How much water your lawn needs in the summertime depends on a host of factors, including where you live and how often rain falls in that region. Overwatering can promote the growth of fungus and adversely affect your lawn's root system, making it difficult for roots to grow deep. Speak with a local landscaping professional to determine how often you should water your lawn each week.

- Strategically position your sprinklers. When choosing where to put down your sprinklers, hook them up to your

hose, turn them on and then watch to see where the water is going. Areas that exposed to sun are most in need of water, so make sure the bulk of your water isn't going to shaded areas beneath trees. In addition, make sure you aren't wasting water on sidewalks, patios and driveways. Sprinklers should be positioned so none of the water they're shooting out is landing on surfaces that don't need water. It

sounds simple, but too often homeowners drop their sprinklers down, turn them on and then walk away without waiting to see where the water is landing. Position sprinklers or adjust sprinkler heads so all the water is landing on your lawn.

Keeping a lawn lush and green at the height of summer requires homeowners to adopt effective strategies. Such a strategies can make the difference between a lush landscape and one that succumbs to summer heat.

Considerations for Outdoor Entertaining

Outdoor parties have a flair all their own. Entertaining outside means being able to enjoy the fresh air, sun and extra space that the great outdoors allows.

Entertaining outdoors may include intimate barbecues with friends or weddings with hundreds of guests. While parks, yards, and gardens can make beautiful backdrops for parties, hosts still need to emphasize preparation when throwing an outdoor party.

Select and prepare the space

Many homeowners host parties for friends and family in their backyards. Whereas other spaces, including parks, require the transport of food and other supplies, backyards offer the ultimate in convenience, allowing homeowners to cook foods in their kitchens and then carry items directly to the backyard.

Backyards are not always set up or equipped for events, and preparation will be required to turn the yard into a party-worthy area. Plan a day for cleanup. Remove toys, tools and debris. Be sure the grass is mowed and clippings are removed. Address any tripping hazards and make sure there is an easy path in and out of the party, as well as to the restrooms. Take inventory of tables and seating options and rent or buy extra seating if necessary.

Provide shade and shelter

Every party host hopes for good weather when entertaining outside, but it is best to have a contingency plan in place just in case Mother Nature does not cooperate. Awnings and patio umbrellas can only do so much, and it may be necessary to install pop-up tents or stationary gazebos to protect guests from the elements. Think about renting tents from party supply companies, which usually will erect the tents and take them down after use.

Even if the weather will be pleasant, have spots where guests can escape the sun. It can be uncomfortable and dangerous to sit in the sun for long periods of time.

Keep food temperatures consistent

If you plan to offer buffet-style cuisine, arrange for serving dishes that will keep foods hot or cold as needed. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition advises that it is important to keep foods safe when entertaining outside. Cold foods should be kept in coolers or served on beds of ice. Use hot chafing dishes to keep hot foods at a serving temperature at or above 140 F. Refrigerate or refreeze foods within two hours or after one hour if it is above 90 F outside.

Plan for insects

Entertaining outdoors means sharing the space with insects and animals. Ants can be a nuisance, but wasps and bees can be harmful, particularly if a person is allergic. Use repellent candles around the entertaining space to keep bugs away. Make canisters of insect repellent available to guests.

Home improvement centers sell bug traps to keep bees and other insects away from foods and people by using sweet lures. Netting on tents or a screened-in area also can keep guests comfortable.

Partying outdoors can be convenient and fun. But hosts still must take steps to ensure their guests have a safe and enjoyable time.



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