

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Watering Tips to Help Drought Stressed Lawns**

Continued dry conditions with little or no natural precipitation over months of time has severely stressed turfgrass in lawns throughout the region. Now is the time to start watering lawns to reduce stress on turfgrass, even if automatic sprinkler systems have not been started yet.

Here are some simple steps that everyone can follow to help relieve stress off of turfgrass, and apply irrigation water to maximize water infiltration in the soil to benefit the turfgrass plants.

- The optimal time to water turfgrass is in the morning before 10:00 a.m. before the wind speed picks up, and the evaporation rate increases. If morning watering is not possible due to schedules, watering after 5:00 p.m. until dusk is an acceptable alternative where the wind speed hopefully decreases along with the evaporation rate.
- If you do not have a sprinkler system, or have not turned it on yet, place a low-lying sprinkler out in an area of the yard. Turn it on, and let it run for 30 minutes. After the time has passed, take a Phillips head screwdriver and shove it into several locations where the water was just applied.
- How far did the screwdriver go into moist soil? Ideally, the screwdriver needs to go four to five inches deep into moist soil. If the screwdriver did not go four to five inches deep, apply more water until that moist soil depth was achieved. Soil compaction and soil type will impact the ability for water to infiltrate to the ideal depth. Sandy soil types may take less time for the water to reach that depth, and the amount of watering time will need to be adjusted.
- Next, take a small shovel or hand trowel, and shove it into the soil that was just watered. Pull the handle towards you, exposing the root system and showing how far the water infiltrated past the root systems. Ideally, the water application should reach ½ inch below the bottom of the root zone to completely hydrate the root system of the turfgrass plants.
- Repeat this process in different regions of the yards until the entire yard is watered this way. If an automatic sprinkler system is being used at this time, test the water infiltration after each zone has been watered with the above instructions. Adjust the amount of time for watering as needed. By running each zone and measuring infiltration, lawn irrigation equipment can be checked to see if any repairs or replacements are needed on the system.
- This process can be done weekly if a sprinkler system has not been utilized or turned on yet. If a sprinkler system is currently running, apply this set of recommendations to watering through the growing season. If rainy weather returns, and the screwdriver

and trowel tests indicate adequate moisture through the root zone, the sprinkler system can be shut off until irrigation is needed again.

If anyone has any questions about watering tips to help drought stressed lawns, please send an email to [dlott2@unl.edu](mailto:dlott2@unl.edu), call the Extension Office in North Platte at (308) 532-2683 or call your local Nebraska Extension Office. I will be happy to help with any questions that gardeners may have.

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*David Lott is the Horticulture Extension Educator with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in North Platte, Nebraska.*

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