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Landscape Office

HOW TO CALIBRATE YOUR IRRIGATION SYSTEM

During the hottest months of the growing season (June, July, August) in Tidewater your lawn and plants will benefit from at least 1 inch applied in the form of rainwater, irrigation water or both. *[reference: Pub. 426-322 Virginia Coopertive Ext.]*

Immediate soaking and often daily watering for the first week or two after your new landscape has been installed is a necessity to lessen the stress of transplant and/or aid in germination. For this reason our technician has set up run times for the different stations (zones) based on the type of sprinklers or drip installed in that zone to get you started and set the schedule for more frequent watering.

After the first week or two it will be important to reduce the frequency of watering.

When adjusting your system please remember NOT ALL STATIONS SHOULD BE SET FOR THE SAME RUN TIME. Calibrating run times for each zone is not as critical right away, but it can save water and money and help protect your lawn and plants from disease and stress so it is a good idea to fine tune and monitor your system.

Follow these 4 easy steps to fine tune your system for spray and rotor zones:

1) Obtain several (3-5) containers or tin cans (3 to 6 inches in diameter) to catch the irrigation water.
2) Place the containers randomly in one zone at a time. Go to the controller and run that zone manually for 15 minutes ~ "Manual Single Station" (instructions are inside the door of the controller). Use a ruler to measure the depth of water collected in each container. Averaging them all together - record the result.
3) Once you know this number, you can calculate how much time will needed to apply one of an inch of water in that zone. Repeat the entire procedure in every zone because there will be differences in the irrigation rates.
4) Go to the controller and set the days you wish to water. Our "Guidelines for Irrigation" can be helpful in setting up the schedule. Now adjust the times to each station based on the recorded results to apply 1" to each zone.

EXAMPLE: ¼ inch of water was the average collected in 15 minutes in zone 1. Set the run time for station 1 for 30 minutes if scheduling **EVERY THREE DAYS** (2 times per week x ½ in. applied = 1 in. per week)

Because exposures (sun, wind, shade etc.) can vary it is important to monitor the watering and make adjustments to your irrigation schedule from area to area within your landscape. Rain sensors will bypass scheduling watering ONLY DURING A RAIN EVENT and a short time after until the sensor drys out, but you will need to decide whether to skip any future scheduled watering cycles by checking local rainfall amounts online (measured in inches) or measuring natural rainfall with a garden rain gauge.