

The Highlands Ranch Guide to Outdoor Watering

Testing Your System: The Catch Can Test

The performance of sprinkler heads depends on many variables, including the pressure and the design of the system. For a quick test of your sprinkler system's output and efficiency, follow these steps to perform a catch can test and see how much water your sprinklers use.

1. Place equal-sized containers, such as soup cans or milk cartons, between sprinkler heads (test each zone separately). The containers should all be the same size and shape and should all have vertical sides. The more containers you use, the more accurate the measurement will be. Make a sketch of where the cans are placed.
2. Run your system exactly 15 minutes (time it with a stop watch).
3. Measure the amount of water in each container with a ruler. Record the reading per can on the sketch where the can was placed.
4. Ideally, an irrigation system should apply water uniformly across the lawn. They do not. Make a note on your sketch which containers contain a lot more or a lot less water. Minor adjustments to most systems can improve efficiency and green up the dry spots. Check the FAQ's on the back of this pamphlet for more information.
5. To determine Application Rate (AR) of a zone in inches per hour, add up the cans and divide by the number of catch cans used. This gives the average amount of water per catch can in inches. Multiply this number by 60, and then divide the result by the test time in minutes.

Example: $0.3'' + 0.4'' + 0.5'' + 0.6'' + 0.7'' = \frac{2.5''}{5 \text{ cans}} = 0.5'' \quad \frac{(0.5'' \times 60\text{min})}{15 \text{ min (run time)}} = 2'' \text{ (AR)}$

6. Find your sprinkler's AR and the Monthly Suggested Water Usage in the table to the right to find out how long you should run your sprinklers for the week (Example: If your sprinkler's AR is 2.00 inches and it is June, with a suggested application of 1.25 inches, you should run that zone for 38 minutes total during that week).
7. Determine sprinkler run times. Fill in the following schedule based upon the application rates and inches per week. Keep an eye on your lawn and make adjustments as needed. **Determining Cycles:** A cycle is one complete operation of all your sprinkler zones. Shorter cycles improve watering in heavy soils, slopes, or when sprinklers have a high application rate. Run through all zones at one-half or one-third the total time and add additional start times to provide the total depth recommended. Try to keep cycles within an hour of each other. This will help prevent puddling and runoff.

Monthly Suggested Water Usage

May and September: 1.0 inch per week

Zones	Application Rate (AR)	Minutes/Week	Cycles (2-3)	Minutes/Watering Cycle

June: 1.25 inches per week

Zones	Application Rate (AR)	Minutes/Week	Cycles (2-3)	Minutes/Watering Cycle

July and August: 1.5 inches per week

Zones	Application Rate (AR)	Minutes/Week	Cycles (2-3)	Minutes/Watering Cycle

October: 0.5 inches per week

Zones	Application Rate (AR)	Minutes/Week	Cycles (2-3)	Minutes/Watering Cycle

Recommended Watering Times

Weekly Suggested Water Usage

	0.5 in	1.00 in	1.25 in	1.50 in
0.25 in	120 min	240 min	300 min	360 min
0.50 in	60 min	120 min	150 min	180 min
0.75 in	40 min	80 min	100 min	120 min
1.00 in	30 min	60 min	75 min	90 min
1.25 in	24 min	48 min	60 min	72 min
1.50 in	20 min	40 min	50 min	60 min
1.75 in	17 min	34 min	43 min	51 min
2.00 in	15 min	30 min	38 min	45 min
2.25 in	13 min	27 min	33 min	40 min
2.50 in	12 min	24 min	30 min	36 min
2.75 in	11 min	22 min	27 min	33 min
3.00 in	10 min	20 min	25 min	30 min

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it possible to over-water my landscape?

Yes. People often apply too much water to their landscape. Water your lawn so the moisture will encourage the roots to grow deeper. Consistently exceeding your water budget in the summer may indicate overwatering.

How do I find out my soil's moisture level?

The best indicator is to look at and feel your soil. If the soil is moist, you do not need to water.

A soil probe or screwdriver can be inserted into your lawn. If it doesn't go through the soil easily for three to five inches, the lawn may need water. If you are able to reach five or more inches, the lawn is adequately moist.

How can my sprinkler system save water?

Check your system regularly. Fix or replace clogged, damaged, or broken sprinkler heads. Also look for sprinklers that may be tilted or set into the ground too deep. Sprinklers should be vertical and should not be obstructed by surrounding grass, plants or other objects.

Grit and debris can clog sprinkler heads, causing gaps in the spray pattern. Remove the nozzle, wash the screen and briefly run the system to flush.

Make sure sprinklers produce droplets, not mist. On the top of most sprinkler heads is a small screw that, with a minor adjustment, can change the radius and may apply water more evenly.

Outdoor Watering on the Web

Metro District of Highlands Ranch and Centennial Water: www.highlandsranch.org

Irrigation Association:
www.irrigation.org

WaterSaver: www.watersaver.org

Colorado State University: www.ext.colostate.edu

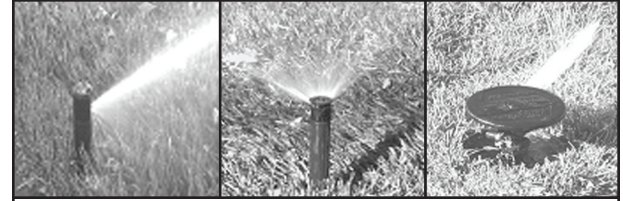
GreenCO: www.greenco.org



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The Highlands Ranch Guide to

OUTDOOR WATERING



Outdoor Watering

More than half of all water used in Highlands Ranch from May through October is used outdoors. That's why Centennial Water and the Metro District have created this guide to help you manage your outdoor water use.

Most lawns in Colorado are over watered. The table inside this guide suggests the amount of water to apply to your lawn per week for an attractive yard during a typical irrigation season.

- Before watering your lawn, check to see if the grass needs water.
- Gone are the days of setting your sprinkler system and forgetting about it for the summer. Adjust it for the changing weather conditions.
- The water available in Highlands Ranch is yours to protect and to use wisely.

Contact Us


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