



Watering Instructions

Most sprinkler zones with **rotor heads** (which send out a single rotating stream of water) can be set to run for 10–15 minutes. A good starting point is 10 minutes per zone, adjusted to fit your site. Zones with **fixed spray heads** usually need only 2–3 minutes per cycle. If you're watering by hand with **above ground sprinklers**, 10–15 minutes per session is a good place to start.

Try not to overwater. Long run times can cause puddling and runoff, especially on slopes. A little puddling around sprinkler heads is fine—the goal is to keep the soil moist without saturating it. Ideally, the lawn stays firm enough to walk on between watering cycles.

If the surface dries out completely within five minutes of a zone shutting off, the watering is probably too light. Aim for about 50–65% of the surface to be dry just before the next scheduled watering.

A typical starting schedule for germination is **three to four short cycles per day**, such as 8:00 AM, 12:00 PM, and 4:00 PM, plus an early-evening cycle if needed.

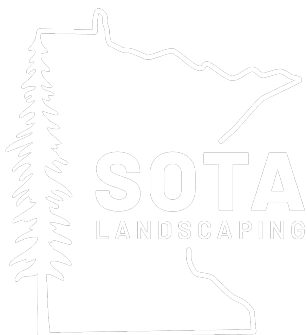
In hot, dry, or windy weather, feel free to lengthen run times or add a start time, since dry wind can dry out the soil quickly. It's best to finish watering by early evening, because moisture that lingers overnight encourages mold and fungus.

The first 14 days after planting are the most important for germination. If the soil dries out completely, germination slows or stops, so aim to keep the seedbed **evenly moist** throughout the day.

Take a quick look at the edges and corners to make sure the sprinklers reach every part of the seedbed.

If **hydroseed** was installed, it will darken when wet and lighten as it dries, similar to wet pavement, which makes it a handy way to gauge moisture.

Small light-colored patches will appear and spread as it dries. That doesn't always mean it's time to water right away, but if the hydroseed stays completely dry for long stretches, germination can suffer.



Fertilizer

For best results, use a granular **starter fertilizer**—look for the word “*starter*” on the bag. Menards, Fleet Farm, Home Depot, and local garden centers all carry good options, and any starter formulated for turfgrass will work (Scotts is a reliable national brand). Bags list coverage in square feet, so follow the recommended rate on the bag. Under-applying is a common reason new lawns are slow to fill in.

A note for Minnesota: state law allows phosphorus fertilizer when a new lawn is being established, so a starter fertilizer is the right choice for a new seeding. Once the lawn is established, switch to a phosphorus-free fertilizer (the middle number on the bag is 0) unless a soil test shows your lawn needs phosphorus. Please sweep any granules off driveways and sidewalks after spreading.

Follow-up fertilizer is what helps new grass thicken. Without it, growth tends to be slow. There’s no one-size-fits-all schedule because soil and growing conditions vary, but this timeline works well in most cases:

- **First follow-up application:** 3–4 weeks after hydroseeding. (Starter fertilizer added during hydroseeding is typically depleted after 28 days.)
- **Subsequent applications:** Every 3–4 weeks until the lawn is growing vigorously. In some cases, applications can be made every 2 weeks.
- **Soil type matters:** Light (sandy) soils usually require more frequent fertilization than heavy (clay) soils.

Growth rate is a great indicator. When mowing at 3", you should see solid growth each week. If you’re only trimming off about ½", your lawn could probably use more fertilizer. In fast-growing conditions, mowing every 5 days may be needed.

Seasonal expectations:

- Growth slows during cool weather (night temps in the 30s–40s) and in the peak of summer heat. Grass may go dormant in hot, dry stretches but will recover with cooler temperatures and rainfall.

- Fertilizing in July is fine—just hold off during prolonged heat and drought.

Turf color is a helpful indicator. Healthy, well-fertilized turf is dark green. Pale green or yellowing grass often means it could use more fertilizer. A couple of signs to look for:

- **Animal urine spots** that look much greener and taller than the surrounding turf show what properly fertilized grass looks like.
- **Striping patterns** with alternating light and dark green bands usually point to uneven fertilizer spreading rather than fertilizer burn. The lighter areas received less and would benefit from another application.

Mowing

We recommend setting your mower deck at **3 inches** or higher. Mulching your clippings instead of bagging them returns valuable nutrients to the soil and does **not** contribute to thatch buildup.

If clippings are left in noticeable clumps after mowing, one of these may be the cause:

- The mower blade is dull
- Mowing was delayed too long
- The grass was wet
- The mowing height is set too low

A 3" mowing height promotes healthier growth. Grass blades grow more slowly the farther they extend from the plant base, so mowing at 2.5" actually produces more clippings over time than mowing at 3". Keeping the grass slightly taller also improves drought tolerance and encourages deeper roots.

Try not to remove more than about one-third of the blade height in a single mowing. Cutting off too much at once stresses new grass and can set it back or even kill it, so if the lawn gets ahead of you, bring it down gradually over a few mowings.

Weed Management During Establishment

It's normal to see some weeds while a lawn is getting established, and there's no need to be alarmed. Most fast-growing, upright weeds aren't true turf weeds, and regular mowing at 3 inches about every 7 days, along with competition from the developing grass, usually takes care of them without herbicides.

If needed, a **broadleaf herbicide** can be applied 6–8 weeks after seeding. Please skip post-emergent crabgrass control during the first growing season, since it can damage young turf.

Crabgrass is an annual weed that can't tolerate frost—much like tomatoes or begonias—so if some shows up, there's no need to worry. It will die off with the first hard frosts of fall, while turfgrass, a frost-tolerant perennial, keeps filling in and crowding it out as temperatures cool.