

I am starting to receive questions about when to begin watering lawns. However, with much of Utah, including Juab County, being relatively short on water, waiting, if reasonably possible, is responsible because lawns use more water than other parts of the landscape. Generally, it's warm and dry enough to begin watering between mid-May and early June. Still, many irrigation companies and municipalities request that residents wait until early June. The lawn may brown out a little here and there, but it will revive once irrigation begins.

Besides waiting a few weeks to start irrigating, there are other inexpensive ways to conserve water while keeping the lawn green. A primary method is to purchase a "smart" sprinkler controller. These controllers, manufactured by several companies, use real time weather data from local weather stations, forecasts, and current conditions to determine how much and when to irrigate. They connect to the internet, and you can program and control them using a phone app. You can adjust irrigation times if the controller is under or overwatering. If you visit [utahwatersavers.com](http://utahwatersavers.com), rebates are often available for purchasing one of these controllers. Otherwise, if you do not have a smart controller, you must adjust it three or four times according to the time of year and the temperature outside.

Another way to save water is to become familiar with your lawn. Instead of relying solely on your irrigation clock, learn to recognize what lawn drought stress looks like. One of the easiest signs to see is when you walk on the lawn and leave footprints that remain visible several seconds after they were made. Additionally, if you are barefoot and walk on the lawn, the soil underneath will feel hard and will not give at all when you walk on it. As drought stress progresses, a lack of water will cause the lawn to brown out. The lawn is not dying; it is going dormant. When this happens, the lawn enters hard dormancy, with the roots and crowns remaining alive. The lawn will grow with regular irrigation, but it will take several weeks to break dormancy and recover.

Suppose you are planting a new lawn or renovating areas of your landscape. Certain grass mixes from local vendors, such as farm stores and garden centers, require 1/3 less water than traditional Kentucky Bluegrass. Additionally, the State recently legalized growing hybrid Bermuda grass. It only uses 1/2 of the water compared to Kentucky Bluegrass. It makes great turf and tolerates heavy foot traffic. One consideration is that it is only green from mid-May to late September.

A final consideration is removing turf that is not used. If you only walk on areas of your lawn when you mow, these areas are candidates for removal. It is common to transform these areas into water-wise landscape beds containing beautiful but drought-hardy shrubs and perennials.