

Lawn Looking Sparse?

Spruce Up With a Sprinkler System

By Charlene Pierce

A new sprinkler system can make your lawn the envy of the neighborhood, with soft grass

you can sink your toes into while the kids play carefree. You'll have more time for things besides yard work and more cash in your pocket with today's systems.

Children love playing in the sprinkler, and those old-fashioned manual sprinklers are great for keeping the kids occupied on warm summer days. They aren't so great for creating a lush, green lawn. Aside from the mess of hoses and the commitment of time needed to go out and move the sprinkler every 30 minutes, manual sprinklers lead to unevenly watered lawns during unideal times. Watering at inefficient times leads to evaporation and higher water usage.

Generally speaking, lawns need about an inch and a half of water every week to be healthy. The needs of your lawn will vary depending on the weather, the grade of your yard, and the type of grass. If you can easily push a screwdriver six to eight inches into the soil, your lawn is too wet, which causes the roots to rot. If the blades of grass start to roll up and you see light patches, your lawn is suffering from drought. When your grass is a lush green and footprints bounce right back undetectable, you have a healthy lawn. You can achieve a beautiful lawn easily when watering is automated and regulated.

In-ground sprinkler systems are automated. You can program the system to water the lawn at a particular time (preferably finishing before 10:00 a.m.) two to three times a week, and you will create a perfectly watered lawn. Your system will be installed to reach every nook and cranny of your yard without creating dry or overly damp areas.

If you change your landscaping, you can adjust the sprinkler heads accordingly. You may decide to plant a garden and need to water it frequently. If so, you can program your system to run your garden's sprinkler heads daily and the rest of the lawn twice a week. Every part of the yard will receive the hydration it needs.

With the advancements in robotics and technology, you can now find sprinkler systems that automatically adjust to the weather. Rain sensors shut off the sprinkler, so you aren't running it in the rain. Wireless smart controllers adjust the amount of water it uses, running less if it has rained in the past few days and more if it's been dry. Pressure-regulated sprinkler heads can reduce water usage by a gallon of water every minute. These can also be installed on existing systems.

When choosing a sprinkler system, look for a company that installs and maintains it to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to provide a high-performing and long-lasting system. Ask them about their maintenance policies and if they guarantee their work against leaks or other issues. Look up the contractor online to ensure it is a local company with a verifiable customer service record.

There are sprinkler systems you can buy and install yourself. However, doing so bypasses the professionals that will help you choose the best placements for your sprinkler heads. Irrigation specialists have years of experience designing the best systems to meet long-term needs. They will create a system to get you the best results with the least amount of water, saving you money on your water bill. Experienced professionals can also identify potential drainage issues and will create a plan to address them.

The very best time to install a sprinkler system is before you lay the sod. If the grass is already established, shoot for the fall to install a new system. When contractors install the system, they dig trenches to bury water lines. Your lawn will recover better in the fall because the soil isn't dry from the summer sun, and new grass will have the spring to recover before the heat returns. Your spring and summer plants will be in hibernation mode, so the installation won't disturb them. Trees and shrubs can be planted during or after the installation and will have plenty of time to dig their roots before winter arrives.

Speaking of those lovely Nebraska winters, you must shut the water off and winterize your system before freezing temperatures arrive. Your pros will ensure all lines are clear and drained. They will also inspect the system for any damage. In the spring, they will check the system, vacuum breaker, and valves before turning it back on. The fee to winterize and restart your sprinkler system is minimal compared to the money you'll save not having to repair leaks or broken lines. Check with your irrigation specialist today! **WE**

Sources for this article included: dailycivil.com, consumerreports.org, and rainbird.com.

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