



Many of our Rye Water District customers are getting their sprinkler systems ready for the summer season. On average, customers in our District use almost four times as much water in the summer than they do the rest of the year. This puts stress on our water supply sources, especially as we continue experience dryer than normal conditions in the Seacoast area. While you might use water outdoors for many purposes, the majority of outdoor water use can be attributed to outdoor watering of lawns and landscapes. Properly managing your irrigation system can help reduce your annual outdoor water.

Many homeowners hire contractors to install and service their in-ground irrigation system and maintain their landscapes. Irrigation professionals with the skills and knowledge can help you improve the health and water efficiency of your outdoor space.

### **Here are some recommendations for improving outdoor water efficiency**

Test your irrigation system to ensure the zones are programmed correctly

Make sure water is only going where it's needed by ensuring the system is functioning properly—no overspray, broken sprinklers, or leaks

To realize full savings from an efficient irrigation schedule, learn how to adjust your irrigation system with the seasons. Ask your irrigation professional to provide a written irrigation schedule that also accounts for seasonal changes.

Make sure your system isn't irrigating in the middle of the day when water will evaporate before it soaks into the lawn.

Retrofit your irrigation system with new, water-efficient technologies, such as a WaterSense labeled controller, rainfall sensor, or high-efficiency sprinkler nozzles. Install an automatic rain shutoff switch on your irrigation system. These switches allow you to take advantage of the water Mother Nature provides without having to pay for it. Weather-based irrigation controllers can be stand-alone controllers or "add-on" or "plug-in" devices that can be used in conjunction with an existing clock-based controller to help it water more efficiently.

Utilize drip or trickle irrigation instead of spray nozzles for landscape plantings. These systems apply water near the root zone of the plant, ensuring a complete watering while reducing excess water usage.

Think about what else can be done on your property to use less water like using regionally appropriate, drought-tolerant, or native plants or groundcover that thrive in our climate and don't need as much water

Utilize microirrigation in flower beds and other non-turf areas to deliver water directly to the root zone of plants, where it is needed most, preventing runoff and reducing evaporation.

Overwatering is more common than many realize and can cause weed growth, plant disease, and runoff that carries fertilizers and pesticides into local water bodies. Water deeply and infrequently to encourage deep, strong root systems. The seacoast area of Rye receives an average of just over four inches of rain per month. Your lawn and landscape need no more than 1 inch of rain per week, so there will be periods when your lawn requires no watering. When supplemental watering is necessary, watering just enough is imperative. Too much water can lead to fungal diseases and wash away important nutrients. Brown or dry grass doesn't necessarily mean that grass is dead it usually just means the grass is entering a resting state due to stressful conditions like drought or extreme heat. The grass is conserving energy by slowing down growth and turning a brownish color, but it is still alive and will green up again when conditions improve; essentially, it's a natural survival mechanism to cope with harsh weather.

The UNH Cooperative Extension website has additional tips:

<https://extension.unh.edu/agriculture-gardens/landscaping/landscaping-water-quality>

#### LOOK FOR THE WATERSENSE LABEL!

- Select an irrigation professional certified by a WaterSense labeled program to assist with designing, installing, maintaining, or auditing your system to maximize water efficiency. Homeowners and landscapers can look for both types of WaterSense labeled controllers for a new irrigation system or to upgrade an existing one. For more information, visit

