



It's Time to Get Serious About Water*

In this dry spring, we need to remember that

- The Okanagan Valley has the **lowest per capita availability of water** in Canada
- At an average of 1,032 L/day/person, we are some of **the heaviest users** in Canada

Those two facts don't pair well, especially when 24% of domestic water is used to irrigate lawns.

(Source: OBWB)

We need to change that picture. Is it possible to reduce our water use and still have a beautiful green lawn? Yes! Here's how:

If you are planting a new lawn, consider using a grass mix such as Eco-turf or Enviro-turf which require less water and less mowing. Or consider an alternative to grass such as thyme or clover.

Even if you have a conventional Kentucky bluegrass lawn, you can reduce your water use in the following ways:

1.If your lawn looks hungry, top-dress it with about 1/4-1/2-inch of compost (may be screened) in spring. Repeat as needed (in fall or every 2-3 years). Irrigate afterwards to work the compost into the soil.

2.Don't water in spring until soil is dry at least two inches down. (Check with your finger, a piece of pipe, a spoon.) Water deeply, one hour or more, depending on whether soil is clay, sandy or loamy. **Don't water again until the soil needs it.**

3, Irrigate at night or in the early morning to minimize evaporation.

4.Set mower to cut grass at least three inches high. Longer blades (leaves) will:

- ✓ Shade crown of grass plants, resulting in less dead material (thatch)
- ✓ Keep soil cooler, which plants like
- ✓ Reduce the energy grass has to expend to regrow, and the energy used to mow (i.e. you will mow less frequently).
- ✓ Make it more difficult for weed seeds to work their way to the soil and germinate.

5.Allow the grass clippings to remain on the lawn and return nutrients to the soil.

6.Dig out broad-leaved weeds. A healthy lawn will soon out-compete them. NB White clover in a lawn is *not* a weed. It fixes nitrogen in the soil, nourishing the grass plants.

AVOID:

- chemical fertilizer,
- pesticides,
- walking on lawn immediately after watering (especially if soil has high clay content.)
- mechanical aeration (heavy machines compact the soil),

That's it! You'll save water and energy, and create a healthier lawn for your grandchildren, your pets, and your pocketbook.

*The lawn in the photo was watered every ten days to three weeks, following these guidelines, and came through more than twenty hot, dry Okanagan summers.