Cycle & Soak

Saves Water Outdoors

Are you aware...

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. Landscapes with clay soils or steep slopes may benefit from dividing irrigation runtimes into smaller intervals with short breaks to allow water more time to soak in. This practice is referred to as cycle-and-soak.

When Cycle-and-Soak Makes Sense

In clay soils, water soaks in at a slower rate resulting in puddles, pools and runoff. Sloping landscapes tend to have water runoff before it can be absorbed. In either case, breaking up irrigation runtimes into shorter intervals allows the water to soak in and plants receive the amount of water they need without water going to waste.

Getting Started with Cycle-and-Soak

Split runtimes for each irrigation zone and water in short intervals based on the amount of water the landscape needs. For each zone, record the total runtime needed and the amount of time it takes for water to start pooling. This is the maximum time to water in one cycle. If it is equal to or greater than your daily scheduled time, cycle-and-soak is not necessary. Repeat for each zone.

WaterSense & Cycle-and-Soak

The WaterSense label helps identify water-efficient irrigation controllers that automatically adjust the irrigation schedule based on soil moisture levels, local weather and/or landscape conditions. In some landscapes, additional adjustments to your irrigation schedule can result in more water savings and a healthier landscape.

Where can I find more information?

For more information regarding Cycle-and-Soak, WaterSense and/or help determining the amount of water plants need each week, visit the EPA's website at: https://www.epa.gov/watersense/outdoors

Information for this article obtained from the EPA Cycle-and-Soak brochure.