

NEW LANDSCAPE & LAWN WATERING INSTRUCTIONS

Pennsylvania Establishment & Care Guide

Proper watering is the most important responsibility following the installation of new plant material, grass seed, hydroseed, or sod.

These recommendations are specifically designed for Pennsylvania growing conditions, including our cool-season turf varieties, clay-heavy soils, changing seasonal temperatures, summer heat, and variable rainfall.

Pennsylvania weather can change quickly. The schedules below should be used as a general guideline and adjusted based on rainfall, temperature, soil type, sun exposure, wind, drainage, and the time of year.

The Goal: Consistently Moist – Never Saturated

Do not rely solely on a preset irrigation timer. Check the actual soil conditions and adjust watering accordingly.

NEW TREES, SHRUBS & PERENNIALS

Newly installed plants have limited root systems and require consistent moisture while their roots establish into the surrounding soil.

Pennsylvania properties commonly contain clay or clay-based soils, which can retain moisture for extended periods. Because of this, checking the soil before watering is extremely important.

Weeks 1-2

- Check daily and water as needed.
- Water slowly and thoroughly around the root ball so moisture penetrates the entire root zone rather than simply wetting the mulch or soil surface.
- During cool, cloudy, or rainy periods, daily watering may not be necessary.
- During hot, sunny, dry, or windy weather, plants may require more frequent attention.

Weeks 3-12

- Check every 2-3 days and water thoroughly as needed.
- As plants begin establishing, transition toward deeper, less frequent watering to encourage roots to grow into the surrounding soil.

After 12 Weeks

- Check approximately once per week and provide supplemental water when rainfall is insufficient.
- New trees and larger shrubs may require supplemental watering throughout their first full growing season and potentially beyond, particularly during hot or dry periods.

How to Check Your Plants

Move the mulch aside and check the soil approximately 2–4 inches below the surface near the root ball.

- Dry soil: Water thoroughly.
- Slightly moist soil: Conditions are generally appropriate.
- Wet or saturated soil: Do not water. Allow the soil additional time to drain.
- Important Pennsylvania Soil Consideration
- Many Pennsylvania soils contain significant amounts of clay. Clay soil may appear dry on the surface while remaining very wet around the root system.

Never determine watering needs based solely on the appearance of the mulch or soil surface.

NEW GRASS SEED

Pennsylvania lawns primarily consist of cool season turfgrasses, including tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, and perennial ryegrass.

These grasses perform best during Pennsylvania's cooler spring and fall growing conditions. Late summer through early fall is generally an excellent establishment period because soil temperatures remain warm while air temperatures begin to moderate.

Regardless of the installation season, newly seeded areas require consistent moisture for successful germination.

Before Germination

- The upper layer of soil should remain consistently moist but never saturated.
- This may require approximately 2–4 light watering cycles per day during warm or dry weather.
- Cool, cloudy, shaded, or damp conditions may require significantly less watering.
- The goal is not to follow a specific number of watering cycles—it is to prevent the seedbed from completely drying out.

Avoid:

- Allowing seed or soil to completely dry out
- Puddling or standing water

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- Water running across the soil surface
 - Seed washing into low areas
 - Heavy foot traffic
 - Pet traffic

Germination

- Germination time varies depending on turf variety, soil temperature, moisture, and weather conditions.
- Tall fescue, a common Pennsylvania turfgrass, may begin germinating in approximately 7-14 days under favorable conditions, although cooler temperatures or inconsistent moisture can significantly extend this timeframe.
- Some turf varieties may take longer to germinate.
- Do not stop watering simply because some grass has appeared. Different seeds may germinate at different times.

After Germination

- Once grass begins emerging, gradually:
- Reduce watering frequency and increase watering depth.
- This transition encourages roots to grow deeper into the soil rather than remaining near the surface.
- Continue providing consistent moisture while the new lawn develops.

First Mowing

- Allow the new turf to become established before mowing.
- The soil should be firm enough that mowing equipment does not create ruts or pull seedlings from the ground.
- Avoid mowing when the soil is saturated.

HYDROSEEDING

Hydroseed requires similar moisture management to traditional grass seed. The hydroseed mulch helps retain moisture, but it does not eliminate the need for regular watering.

First 1-3 Weeks

- Keep the hydroseed mulch and upper soil consistently moist.
- During warm, sunny, dry, or windy Pennsylvania weather, this may require approximately 2-4 light watering cycles per day.
- During cool spring or fall conditions, fewer watering cycles may be necessary.
- The surface should be:
 - Moist – not flooded or saturated.
 - Do not allow the hydroseed material to completely dry out during germination.

Avoid heavy watering that causes:

- Puddling, soil erosion, seed movement, washouts, hydroseed mulch to move & material to collect in low areas

After Germination

Once the grass has germinated and begins developing, gradually transition from frequent light watering to fewer, deeper watering cycles.

This encourages deeper root development and prepares the turf for normal lawn watering.

NEW SOD

Sod provides an immediate lawn, but it does not have an established root system when first installed.

The roots must establish into the soil beneath the sod before the lawn can tolerate normal conditions.

Immediately After Installation, sod should be thoroughly watered so that both the sod and the soil underneath are moist. You should be able to carefully lift a corner and find moisture underneath the sod.

Weeks 1-2

- Check the sod daily.
- Keep the sod and underlying soil consistently moist while roots begin developing.
- During hot Pennsylvania summer conditions, additional watering may be required.

Pay particular attention to:

- Edges along sidewalks, driveways, curbs, buildings, corners, slopes, South- and west-facing areas & areas receiving full afternoon sun.
- These locations typically dry considerably faster than the rest of the lawn.

Weeks 3-4

- As roots begin establishing, gradually:
- Reduce watering frequency and increase watering depth.
- You can carefully lift a corner of the sod to check establishment.
- If the sod begins resisting being lifted, roots are developing into the soil underneath.
- Continue supplemental watering until the sod is firmly established.
- Limit Traffic

Avoid unnecessary:

- Foot traffic, children playing, pet activity, equipment & recreational activity until the sod is firmly rooted.

PENNSYLVANIA SUMMER WATERING

Pennsylvania summer conditions can include periods of high temperatures, drought, humidity, intense sunshine, and drying winds.

New plants, seed, hydroseed, and sod can lose moisture extremely quickly under these conditions:

- During periods of extreme heat:
- Check newly installed material more frequently.
- Seed and hydroseed may require additional light watering cycles.
- Sod edges near pavement may dry significantly faster than interior areas.
- New plants exposed to afternoon sun or wind may require additional attention.
- Do not compensate for heat by flooding the area.

The goal remains consistent moisture without creating saturated soil or standing water.

PENNSYLVANIA FALL INSTALLATIONS

- Cooler fall temperatures reduce evaporation, but new landscapes still require water.
- Do not stop watering simply because temperatures have cooled or the growing season is ending.
- New trees, shrubs, and especially evergreens should enter the Pennsylvania winter with adequate soil moisture.
- Continue checking newly installed plants and providing supplemental water until the ground begins to freeze, as conditions require.
- This is particularly important during a dry Pennsylvania fall.

RAIN DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN YOU CAN SKIP WATERING

Pennsylvania thunderstorms and summer showers can be misleading. A short, heavy storm may make the landscape appear wet while providing very little moisture to the actual root zone.

- Check the soil rather than assuming rainfall provided sufficient water.
- A significant soaking rainfall may replace a scheduled watering.
- A brief shower generally should not automatically be considered sufficient.
- A simple rain gauge can help determine how much rainfall your property received.

SPRINKLER & IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

Automatic irrigation systems are helpful, but they should not be treated as "set it and forget it" systems during establishment. Every property waters differently. One portion of the property may receive adequate water while another receives too much or too little. Physically check the soil in several areas rather than relying solely on the irrigation controller. Adjust irrigation schedules as Pennsylvania weather conditions change.

SIGNS OF UNDERWATERING

Watch for:

- Wilting or drooping leaves
- Curling foliage
- Browning leaf edges
- Dry or shrinking root balls
- Dry soil below the surface
- Grass seedlings beginning to wilt
- Sod edges becoming brown
- Sod shrinking or pulling apart at seams

If these conditions occur, check soil moisture immediately.

SIGNS OF OVERWATERING

More water is not always better. Overwatering can be particularly problematic in Pennsylvania's heavier clay soils.

Watch for:

- Standing or puddled water
- Constantly saturated soil
- Yellowing foliage
- Soft or declining plant material
- Excessive fungal or mushroom growth
- Water running off instead of soaking in
- Soil remaining wet for extended periods

Allow excessively wet areas time to drain before watering again.

CUSTOMER WATERING RESPONSIBILITY

Once installation is complete, proper watering and ongoing establishment care are the property owner's responsibility unless watering or irrigation management is specifically included in your agreement with Clean Cut Landscape Design, Maintenance & Lighting LLC.

Plant material, grass seed, hydroseed, and sod are living products whose successful establishment depends heavily on proper watering and environmental conditions.

Failure or damage resulting from insufficient watering, excessive watering, drought, extreme temperatures, irrigation failure, washout, erosion, standing water, pet damage, foot traffic, or other environmental conditions outside of Clean Cut's control may not be covered under applicable warranties or guarantees.

The Best Rule to Remember:

DON'T JUST LOOK AT THE SURFACE – CHECK THE SOIL.

Your newly installed landscape should remain consistently moist during establishment, but never continuously saturated.

When weather conditions change, your watering schedule should change with them.

Clean Cut Landscape Design, Maintenance & Lighting LLC

Restoring life's most valuable resource: time. Since 1988.

QUICK WATERING REFERENCE

NEW PLANTS

1. Weeks 1-2: Check daily; water as needed.
 2. Weeks 3-12: Check every 2-3 days; water deeply as needed.
 3. After 12 weeks: Check weekly and supplement rainfall as necessary.
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GRASS SEED

1. Before germination: Keep the seedbed consistently moist. During warm/dry weather, this may require 2-4 light waterings per day.
 2. After germination: Gradually transition to fewer, deeper waterings.
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HYDROSEED

1. First 2-3 weeks: Keep the surface consistently moist. During warm/dry weather, this may require 2-4 light waterings per day.
 2. After germination: Gradually transition to fewer, deeper waterings.
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SOD

1. Weeks 1-2: Check daily and keep sod and underlying soil consistently moist.
2. Weeks 3-4: Gradually transition to deeper, less frequent watering as roots establish.