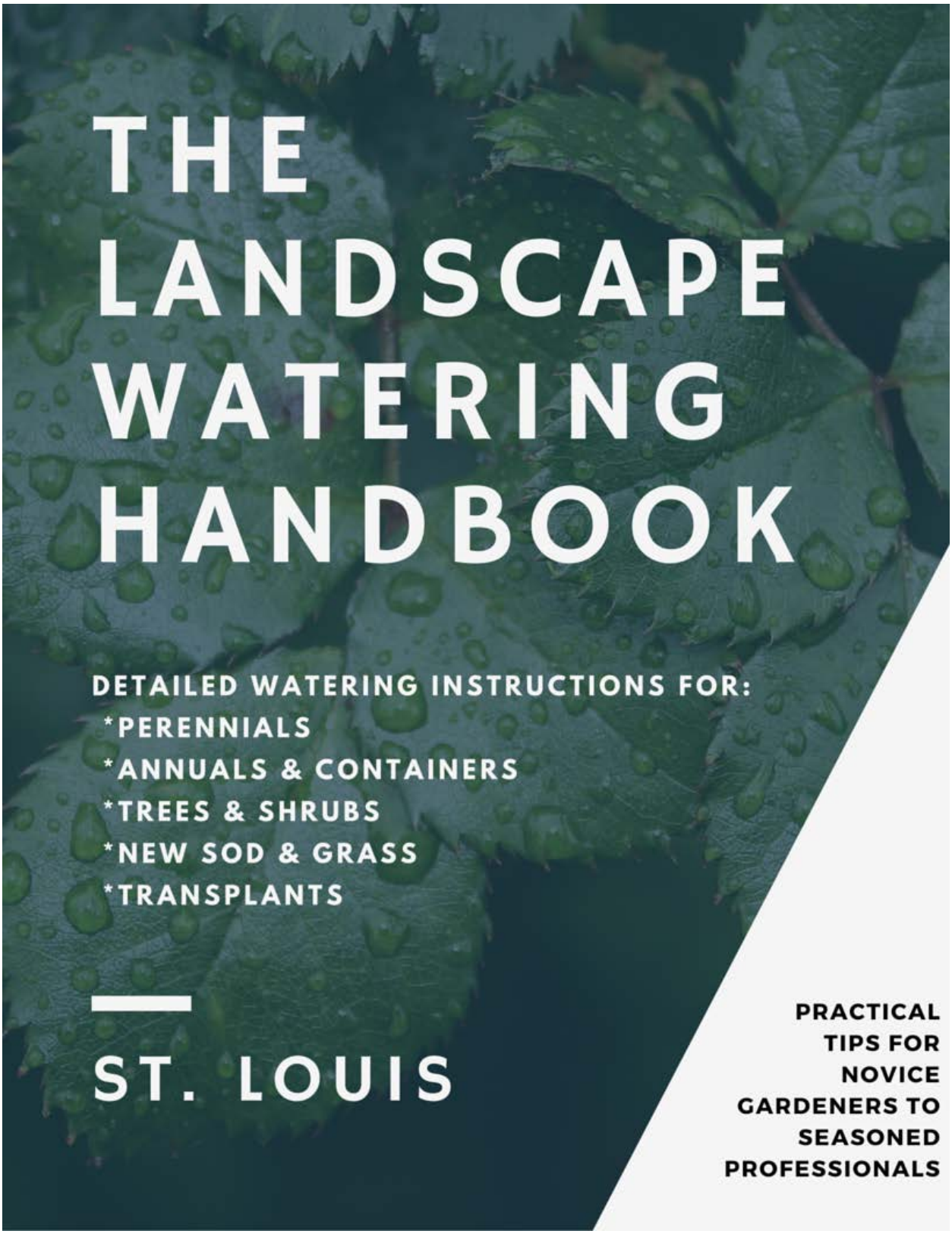
THE
LANDSCAPE
WATERING
HANDBOOK
DETAILED WATERING INSTRUCTIONS FOR:
*PERENNIALS
*ANNUALS & CONTAINERS
*TREES & SHRUBS
*NEW SOD & GRASS
*TRANSPLANTS
ST. LOUIS
PRACTICAL
TIPS FOR
NOVICE
GARDENERS TO
SEASONED
PROFESSIONALS

Water

Water is the most crucial element that will impact the success of newly installed sod or plants. Whether you've spent time, money, or both on a new installation on your property, a winning watering strategy will be the most important thing you can do to help these new residents to survive.

Whether you're a novice gardener or a seasoned professional, this handbook is designed to help you with practical and detailed watering instructions for all sorts of landscapes in the St. Louis area.

Imperative Irrigation

Whether the smallest blade of grass or the largest of trees, plants all need water to live. When plants reach maturity they have had the benefit of developing a root system over a long period of time. Tiny, fibrous roots reach down and out much further than you may even suspect to grab onto the life-giving source of water in the soil. A mature root system helps established plants to survive even in brief periods of dryness.

When new sod or plants are harvested and purchased, a good portion of their root systems have been severed. Your new sod or plantings need extra help from you until they can re-grow an established root system. The volume and duration of watering may vary from one type of plant to another but one key factor remains. Your plant's survival is dependent upon your dedication to consistently give it the water it needs.

Providing enough water for your plants or sod may seem like a relatively simple concept, but you may find that a little misinformation, even with the best intentions, could lead you pretty far astray about what it means to successfully water.

Moisture Misconceptions

Plants survive in nature without people watering them so I really don't need to either.

False. Although plants grow on their own in nature, they start as tiny seeds or shoots, not a 5 gallon container, 2" caliper tree, or mature sod pieces that were suddenly relocated to your property. As plants naturally grow, their root system grows respectively and gets larger over time to support a larger visible part of the plant that you see above the surface. The suburban landscape isn't a nature simulation.

If it rains, I don't really need to water my new sod or plantings.

Actually, this is wrong more than it is right. Truly, if it rains a slow, soaking rain for several hours or most of the day, the ground will become moist and you may be able to skip some watering for a day or so. The problem arises though when rain falls for a short period of time or too quickly. Downpours on dry soil often runoff more than they permeate the soil and most people overestimate how deep even a gentle rain for a short period of time will sink into the soil.

I have a guarantee on some of my new plants, so it doesn't matter if I water because they will get replaced.

<u>It takes teamwork.</u> Although Dowco may offer a warranty on a variety of new plants for a limited time, it's dependent upon a few factors that are beyond our control. One of these factors is if plants are watered properly. The teamwork between our team and you begins when we select plants or sod, and continues past an expert installation to your dedication to properly water.

H_2O How-To, Oh!

Before we give detailed instructions on how to water each specific type of plant or sod, it's important to embrace some proper principles about how you are going to water. Understand that when plants are first installed in their new home on your property, all of their roots are close to their base. We strongly recommend that you water your plants with a hose versus an irrigation system for the first few weeks. This will not only help with water conservation, but will also deliver more water to the areas where roots can actually absorb it.

Using a hose with a watering wand attached will deliver a soft, but steady dose of water for smaller plants. Larger plants such as trees will require longer periods of lower-pressure watering from either wands or soaker hoses, close to their base. New lawn areas will require a slow and consistent delivery of water through sprinklers, frequently throughout the week.

Substantial Saturation

Several factors will impact the ground's ability to hold ample moisture. Temperature, wind, soil structure, and the amount of foliage on plants can all change watering requirements. To make sure you are giving your new plants or lawn areas enough water, you may need to regularly inspect areas to make sure they are moist, but not water-logged. Inspection can be done by several methods:

Method 1: Surface Inspection

Wilting, cupping, color loss, or dropping leaves can be a sign that plants aren't getting enough water. Minor cosmetic cues such as these can often be reversed if watering continues promptly. However, stressed plants could also lose a small portion of foliage at first. Being diligent to water in some cases can help to generate new tissue growth for some varieties. In cases where there may be excessive moisture, there could also be slight discoloration or foliage loss. Again, be sure that water is not pooling in these areas and is properly draining into the soil.

Method 2: Subsurface Inspection

Inspecting sections of soil for moisture can be done manually or with equipment or tools. Moisture meters can be purchased as stand-alone instruments or be installed as an optional part of irrigation systems. Manual soil probes or small digging instruments can also help you to inspect how moist soil is 6”, 12”, or deeper into the soil. Remember that plants need water to reach all of their roots, not just the top portion near the surface.

Another good way to inspect soil moisture at greater depths is to attempt to insert an extra-large screwdriver into the soil. If the soil is moist, you should be able to insert the tool into the ground further, providing you don’t hit any stones or rocks. If it doesn’t seem to go deep enough because the ground is dry and hard below, it could be you’re not watering long enough.

Winning Watering Ways

Here are some tips on how to water new lawn areas and plantings of various types. Following these tips will help your plants or lawn to develop a mature root system faster and prevent losing the time or money you have invested in transforming your property.

New Lawns from Seeding: Lawns can be seeded from a variety of methods but the principles of proper watering remain the same. There are two sets of rules for a newly-seeded lawn, one for before germination, and one for after.

Before germination, your efforts should be focused to keep the grass seed near the surface moist. This is best done by using a sprinkler to deliver a small amount of water over a period of time approximately 15-30 minutes. Repeat this process 2-3 times a day so the seed is less apt to dry out.

Grass varieties will typically germinate in 10-28 days after seeding depending upon the species, temperature, and moisture availability.

After your grass germinates and begins to grow, your efforts should then switch to keeping the soil moist. This means you won't be watering as frequently, but when doing so, you will need to provide more water to soak into the first 1"-2" of soil. Most applications will require a sprinkler to run for approximately 60-75 minutes, 4-5 times a week, for this to occur. Again, factors like wind and temperature will change these requirements. Continue to water your newly-seeded lawn in this post-germination fashion for the following 2 months. If conditions are relatively moderate, be sure to continue to water your established lawn over the first year of its life so that it is receiving 1"-2" of water between watering/precipitation each week.

New Lawns from Sod: To accelerate the process of gaining a mature lawn, some property owners elect for sod to be installed versus seeding. Sod provides instant gratification cosmetically, as a lawn appears to be mature sooner. However, please note that new sod requires a lot more water in initial phases than a seeded lawn. The mature grass plants and soil just underneath need to constantly stay moist, but not waterlogged. Time frames are general recommendations but should be increased if temperatures or wind increases. Keep new sod watered twice each day for 45-60 minutes

for the first few weeks until its root system begins to knit into the soil. You can test this by gently lifting the corners of a piece of sod. After sod begins to root into the soil, water daily for 45-60 minutes. Your new sod will take 6-12 months to fully mature. If conditions are relatively moderate, be sure to continue to water your established lawn over the first year of its life so that it is receiving 1”-2” of water between watering/precipitation each week.

Annuals: These plants are built to grow for one season. They take very little time to develop a full root system and foliage.

Water annuals daily for 2-3 weeks. Using a watering wand attached to a hose, deliver 15-20 seconds of water at the plant’s base, go to another plant nearby, then return for a second and third round of watering at each site. Annuals may also need to be watered throughout the summer, once or twice a week if dryer conditions are present.

Container plantings, once established, will require daily watering.

Perennials: Because these plants need to develop a deeper root system than annuals, and often are installed with slightly larger root systems, perennials need slightly more watering than annuals.

Water perennials in the same fashion as you would annuals, but be sure to do so for 2-4 months after installation at minimum.

Transplants: Small or medium-sized plants that are taken out of native soil on your property and relocated to another area, typically require slightly less watering, providing an ample amount of their root systems came along with them. The reason for this is because the native soil is more likely to hold more moisture versus a potted plant coming from a nursery.

Potted nursery plants contain potting soil mixture which will drain more quickly, requiring more frequent watering.

Trees & Shrubs: The amount of water required for trees and shrubs is dependent upon how big their root system is at the time of installation. Shrubs and small trees may have a root ball that is 10”-18” deep. Most trees that are installed in landscapes could have a root ball that could exceed a 24” depth. Your goal is to water these plants with enough water so that it percolates through the soil and keeps the root system and surrounding soil moist.

To water deeply, water pressure will need to be low and with a longer duration, the greater the depth. While standing and returning with a watering wand on a hose may be satisfactory for small trees or shrubs, larger trees require different watering tactics. Place the end of the hose on the ground near the trunk of the tree. Turn your water on so to only have a slow trickle emitting from the hose’s end. If the pressure is too high, more water will runoff than soak into the soil. A general rule each time you water is to give 10 gallons of water per inch of trunk or foot of plant height. You can time how long it takes to fill your bucket with water on at a given pressure.

Example: Your 2" caliper tree needs to receive 20 gallons of water each time. The trickling hose fills a 5 gallon bucket in 10 minutes at the pressure you selected. Your hose is therefore delivering ½ gallon per minute. In order to deliver 20 gallons of water, you'll need to leave your hose on for 40 minutes for that tree.

Repeat this watering method 3-4 times, weekly for the first year of the tree's life, particularly in times when temperatures and winds increase. If slow, steady rains are present and temperatures cool, soil moisture will be more prevalent and you may be able to ease up on watering these plants.

To speed up the tree watering process for multiple trees, there are temporary water reservoir containers or bags that can be rapidly filled and allow water to drip out of small holes on their undersides at the base of a tree.

This can be particularly helpful if multiple trees are planted on your property at one time. These products can be purchased at most garden supply stores and should be measured by how many gallons of water they hold.

Living With Your Landscape

Your plants are depending on you! Developing a healthy lawn and plants is much like raising children. When they are young they will need extra care and help to grow. After time passes, they'll become less dependent upon you caring for them. Before you know it, you'll be walking outside amazed at how beautiful they are! We wish you the best of luck with your new plants and/or grass. If you ever have questions, please contact us!

About Us:

Dowco is the premier provider of lawn and landscape maintenance in the West County suburbs of St. Louis. We are committed to improving the quality of your life so that you can spend time doing the things you want to do! Our full service menu includes weekly maintenance of your property, plant health visits, and modern site enhancements.

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Schedule a complimentary site visit today
with our team of horticulturists for more watering tips!

"Dowco is the provider of top quality professional services for those who want the best!"