Once/Week Watering All Year Long

The San Antonio Water System has proposed and some policy makers (SAWS Board Members and City Council Members) are supporting the idea of installing Stage 1 water use rules all year. The main feature would be to limit lawn irrigation with sprinklers to once per week based on your home’s address. Visit the SAWS website for more information.

The contention is that we can reduce overall water use and the once/week irrigation application is adequate to keep a lawn green and healthy as long as you fulfill the responsibilities that comes with having a lawn and sprinkler system.

1. You keep your irrigation system in prime working order so that it does not waste water and provides a good distribution over the lawn.
2. You have at least 4 inches of soil under the grass so that there is an adequate soil reservoir.

If you do not have a good irrigation system and/or 4 inches of soil may still be adequate if you are willing to hand water any special problem areas where the distribution is uneven or the soil is shallow.

There is no doubt in my mind that the once/week restriction saves water and based on my experience as a horticulturist I agree that the once/week watering can produce an attractive lawn.

The year-around once per week rule has been opposed in the past because San Antonians should have all the flexibility that the water supply allows when the Edwards Aquifer is full so that we all support the limitations when it is absolutely necessary. To impose limitations when they are not necessary could reduce appreciation for and compliance with those rules.

Both arguments are worthy of consideration. The issue right now is to continue our tradition of community-wide discussion before any changes to the rules are imposed.

Gardeners and landscape industry workers are especially well situated to provide input on this potential evolution of our water conservation structure. We have provided leadership from the beginning of the water conservation effort. That leadership is a major reason why the City of San Antonio has been so successful in organizing and enforcing effective drought management and water conservation programs.

Think about the proposal and let SAWS and your City Council member know where you stand on the idea to require year-around limits on sprinkler irrigation to one day per week. Take the time to develop and then express your opinion, and if the policy members follow the will of the majority, be prepared to comply with the results. This is another example of San Antonio water policy development in action.