

Editor's Note: IANE Board Member Jay Coia, IANE Past President and Member Bryan Sanderson, and irrigation contractor Don Labriole were involved working with Shannon Brawley of RINLA and her colleagues in developing these guidelines. There was a strong possibility that these guidelines could have been very restrictive...so many thanks to all involved in presenting an informed view of landscape and irrigation management to the RIWRB.

Rhode Island Water Resources Board Launches “SLOW THE FLOW THIS SUMMER” Campaign

Campaign aims to inform Rhode Islanders about lawn watering guidelines and conservation efforts during the summer months

PROVIDENCE, RI (June 28, 2011) – The Rhode Island Water Resources Board has launched a public awareness campaign encouraging Rhode Islanders to follow simple watering guidelines this summer to keep lawns healthy while conserving water.

The “SLOW THE FLOW THIS SUMMER” campaign was developed to provide Rhode Island homeowners with year-round instructions on efficient water use for lawn watering both for lawn health and sustainability of our water supply.

“Water is a renewable but finite resource,” said Kenneth Burke, General Manager of the RI Water Resources Board. “Clean water is not always available when we need it and there is so much work and cost involved with producing clean, potable water – that it is truly wasteful to be applying it to lawns. The recent outdoor watering restrictions in both Narragansett and South Kingstown, and existing outdoor restrictions in North Kingstown emphasize the need to balance the use of these precious resources.”

Led by representatives from the Rhode Island Nursery & Landscape Association (RINLA), the University of Rhode Island's Turf Program, and the RI Water Resources Board, stakeholders and experts worked for over a year to develop the State's first lawn maintenance guidelines emphasizing water conservation.

“Working with the Rhode Island Water Resources Board to develop these important parameters was an innovative experience,” said Shannon Brawley, executive director of RINLA. “It brought together expertise from across the State to help educate about appropriate lawn watering and maintenance while conserving our critical resources.”

It is the intent of the Rhode Island Water Resources Board to encourage responsible home lawn maintenance by recommending best management practices:

1. **Establishment:** New lawns can be grown by seed or sod in well drained native soils approximately six to eight inches (6”- 8”) deep. During establishment, lawns should be watered on an as needed basis. Establishment may take one growing season or calendar year. Based upon natural precipitation and temperature there are two ideal times to seed a

lawn in RI, mid April to early June or mid Aug. to early Oct. Sod can be used throughout the growing season to avoid erosion and other growing concerns.

2. **Seed Mixture or Sod Type:** Utilize, in consultation with your landscape contractor or lawn specialist, drought resistant and water efficient turf grass varieties.
3. **Fertilizer:** Moderate applications of fertilizer may be applied, but should not exceed manufacturer's instructions or should be done in consultation with a licensed commercial applicator.
4. **Irrigation/Watering:** Prior to seed germination and for the following three weeks, irrigate as needed to keep the entire seedbed moist during daylight hours. Over watering will be identified by puddling and run-off, which can delay establishment. Once established, no more than one-inch (1") of water per week (in aggregate of natural precipitation and/or irrigation) may be needed. The ideal time of day for lawn watering is in the early morning hours, applied once or twice per week.
5. **Irrigation Systems:** If you are going to put in an irrigation system you must install prior to seeding your lawn. While the homeowner can install their own irrigation system, we recommend hiring a licensed irrigation contractor to ensure an efficient system free of wasteful leaks. Installation of high efficiency irrigation systems rely upon proper design and layout of components, including but not limited to the use of Smart Controllers, and including the installation of a rain interruption device that would help minimize over watering.
6. **Maintenance:** The lawn can be mowed once established to approximately one and half inches (1½") to three inches (3") in the spring and fall and up to four inches (4") in the summer depending on weather conditions and season. Additional maintenance practices including aeration, rolling, liming, fertilization and the use of pest control products when needed will help to encourage a healthy and enjoyable lawn.

The Rhode Island Water Resources Board supports and coordinates the efforts of water users throughout the state to recommend that best management practices and recommendations are utilized in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner.