Meet with a certified irrigation and landscaping professional to learn about irrigation system options and installation.

Here are a few questions to ask:

- Is your company a member of the Irrigation Industry Association of BC (IIABC)?
- Does your company provide service after the installation is completed?
- How do I turn off the water to my irrigation system in case of an emergency?
- Will you provide an irrigation schedule for the system that reflects the current watering regulations?
- Can you explain how to adjust the irrigation schedule and operate the irrigation controller once the installation is completed?

Waterwise lawn care

Irrigation systems provide the water, but a healthy lawn also needs regular maintenance throughout the year.

- Apply lime in spring and fall, for healthy soil and to help protect grass from heat.
- Aerate in spring and fall to increase the flow of water, air and nutrients to the lawn’s roots.
- Overseed in spring and fall with a low-maintenance lawn seed mixture.
- Mow high, about 5 to 6 cm. Taller grass keeps roots shaded and better able to hold water.
- Remove weeds before they have a chance to establish.

Waterwise irrigation

Watering regulations conserve drinking water during the summer and early fall. One hour a week of watering or rain is all you need for a healthy lawn.

STAGE 1
May 1 – Oct 15
- Residential lawns
- Trees, shrubs, flowers
- Vegetable gardens

STAGE 2
- Even Address: Wednesday 4 am – 9 am
- Odd Address: Thursday 4 am – 9 am
- Hand watering, soaker hose or drip irrigation, anytime

STAGE 3
- Lawn watering prohibited
- Sprinklers and soaker hoses prohibited

All activities prohibited in emergency Stage 4.

Visit metrovancouver.org for the complete regulations.
A properly installed, programmed and maintained irrigation system can give you a great-looking lawn while saving time and treated drinking water. Understanding the basics of your system and following a few easy steps can help you avoid an unhealthy lawn from overwatering and a fine when watering regulations are in place.

Know How to Operate Your Irrigation System
Even if your irrigation system was installed and programmed by a professional, you need to know how to adjust its settings. Become familiar with the features and settings for your irrigation controller (sprinkler timer). Keep the manual handy, or find the information online. Watering outside of regulated times could lead to a fine for you, not the irrigation system installer.

Know How Much to Water
The irrigation system should be programmed to water deeply but infrequently. Healthy lawns only need about 2.5 cm of water a week to maintain a deep root system and strong leaf growth. Use your irrigation system for efficient watering, not to give your lawn more than it needs. Frequent overwatering flushes nutrients from the soil, can cause shallow roots and makes your lawn prone to disease and weeds. Less frequent, deep irrigation contributes to healthier landscapes and saves water.

Know When to Irrigate
Before irrigating, evaluate the lawn and garden to determine if they need watering. Running the irrigation system if not required, even if allowed within the regional watering regulations, can lead to unhealthy grass and plants. Irrigate early in the morning, before 9 am, to comply with watering regulations and to reduce water loss due to evaporation. Watering in the evening soaks the lawn overnight, inviting fungus and disease. Follow the watering regulations - water within the correct days and times.

Up to 50 percent of residential irrigation water is lost to evaporation, runoff, overwatering, or improper system design, installation & maintenance.
– US Environmental Protection Agency

Adapt the Irrigation Schedule
Irrigation controllers allow you to turn off sprinklers or suspend the irrigation schedule when it rains. Most systems can accommodate rain and soil moisture sensors that automatically override sprinkling during and after rainfall. Retrofitting an existing system’s controller with rain and soil sensors can be done for a reasonable price. Checking and adjusting your controller as the seasons and temperatures change only takes a few moments and reduces unnecessary watering. Consider adding a monthly reminder to your calendar and be sure to adjust your watering schedule if the regulations change during the year.

Watering times vary depending on the type of irrigation system. Spray heads can deliver a week’s worth of deep watering in as little as 15 minutes, while rotary-head sprinklers need to run for longer. With a rotary-head sprinkler, about one hour per week is enough water for a healthy lawn.

Timing is everything – know how to adjust your controller.

Maintain Your System
Inspect the irrigation system at least monthly for leaks and broken or malfunctioning sprinkler heads. Irrigation professionals can help with more difficult repairs and adjustments, and many problems can be avoided by scheduling a seasonal inspection. Test the system and walk around the yard, looking for areas that are too wet or dry. Pooling or soggy areas and erosion are all signs of problems with the irrigation system, and could be caused by broken pipes, plugged sprinklers or valves or problems with the irrigation controller.

One broken sprinkler head wastes thousands of litres of drinking water.

Test if the system is evenly distributing water by placing empty cans or measuring cups of the same size around the yard. After 15 minutes, check if different cans/cups are receiving too much or too little water. Replace broken, bent or stuck sprinkler heads to avoid spilling or spraying water onto sidewalks and driveways.

If it doesn’t grow, it doesn’t need to be watered.

A properly adjusted sprinkler nozzle will evenly spray large water droplets rather than a fine mist. Keep sprinklers at the correct operating pressure to reduce irregular water distribution from evaporation and wind drift. Before winter weather sets in, a professional can help flush out any water in the irrigation system that could freeze and crack pipes and sprinklers.