

TURFGRASS TRENDS

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Best Management Practices — Part 2

Reduce organic materials in landscape plantings

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Last month, Part 1 of this article discussed trends in turfgrass irrigation management. This section covers irrigation, tree care and fertilization topics.

Following proper management practices can significantly reduce the production of organic materials in landscape plantings. Implementing recommended irrigation, fertilization and other cultural practices can reduce the vegetative growth of turfgrass and woody plants without sacrificing aesthetic appeal or performance. You can achieve both of these goals by employing the techniques described in this article.

Studies indicate that maturing trees receiving 40 to 60 percent of reference evapotranspiration (ET_o) often perform as well as trees receiving 80 to 100 percent ET_o.

Landscape tree irrigation

Most landscape trees require at least some water throughout their establishment period. Properly scheduling irrigations based on reference evapotranspiration (ET_o) and applying the water into the root zone play important roles in the structural integrity and health of the tree, water conservation, and limiting excess organic matter production.

Routinely check and correct sprinkler problems such as misdirected heads that apply large volumes of water to sidewalks and parking lots, and nozzles on drip irrigation systems that are clogged.

Because landscape trees are planted in varying densities and are often mixed with shrubs, groundcovers, and turfgrasses, the use of crop coefficients (K_c's) cannot be legitimately used to schedule irrigations. However, studies

indicate that maturing trees receiving 40 to 60 percent of reference evapotranspiration (ET_o) often perform as well as trees receiving 80 to 100 percent ET_o, with the added benefit of reduced excessive foliar growth and organic matter production. Table 2 lists monthly historical ET_o for locations throughout California.

Landscape trees prefer more infrequent, deep irrigations than do nonwoody plants such as turfgrass. Knowing when to irrigate is as important as knowing how much water to apply. Soil texture and species preference largely determine when to irrigate.

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