

Irrigation Questions & Answers

Answers are provided by Lakewood Ranch's irrigation water provider, Braden River Utilities (BRU), in cooperation with an irrigation committee consisting of local residents.

Q1: Why did the irrigation schedules change?

A: The primary reason for changing the irrigation schedules was to achieve better, more consistent water pressures for LWR residents. Supplying pressurized irrigation water to 6000 homes in 78 neighborhoods is a logistical challenge. Residents who were watering during historically low pressure times (midnight to 5AM) were moved into historically high pressure times of the day (4PM to 9PM). Additionally, these schedule changes were made to (1) balance the number of homes watering at any given time and (2) reduce the impact of common area watering near sidewalks and roadways in the high traffic late afternoon and evening periods, which has been wide spread and a long standing resident complaint.

Q2: What causes low water pressures?

A: Supply and demand largely determine water pressures. If too many residents/communities are watering at the same time, water pressure will likely drop below recommended levels. In order to balance supply and demand and maintain sufficient water pressures throughout LWR, we need to distribute water use throughout the 18 hours per day that *Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD)* allows us to water.

Q3: How were the new community schedules developed?

A: Communities that had been watering between the hours of 5 AM and 10 AM were generally not affected by this schedule change. The remaining communities that were watering from midnight to 5 AM were lifted and moved into the 4 PM to 9 PM time frame, e.g., a community that was watering from midnight to 2 AM is now watering from 4 PM to 6 PM.

Q4: If we have 24/7 or 168 hours a week to water, why can't we water when we want to?

A: *SWFWMD* only allows watering 18 hours per day (4PM-10AM) because of evaporation rates. For Lakewood Ranch, our irrigation water provider *Braden River Utilities (BRU)* has divided the day into 8 hours for irrigating common areas (9PM-

5AM) and 10 hours for residential areas (4PM-9PM and 5AM-10AM). Balancing supply and demand to maintain water pressure is extremely important. Adhering to these new schedules should provide good water pressures throughout LWR.

Q5: Will watering in the late afternoon and evening create fungus?

A: Not necessarily. We live in a humid climate and our turf grasses are naturally susceptible to fungus, regardless of when you irrigate your landscape. *How much* and *how often* you water is just as important as *when* you water. Lawn diseases can also appear due to improper fertilizing, poor air circulation, and mowing too low.

Q6: Why does some irrigation water smell?

A: Years ago most of our irrigation water came from wells located here in LWR. Frequently the water in these wells has a high sulfur content, which is largely responsible for the odor. Today, *BRU* is purchasing high quality, reclaimed water from Sarasota and Bradenton, which has no odor. Currently, about half of our irrigation water is from reclaimed sources, and *BRU* plans on using less well water and more reclaimed water in the coming years, thus reducing the odor.

Q7: Where does our irrigation water come from and how much does it cost?

A: We are fortunate to have an irrigation water provider here in LWR. *BRU* provides high quality, non-potable irrigation water for residential and common area use at a rate that is a small fraction (actually about 1/6th) of what it would cost to use potable (house) water to irrigate our landscapes.

Q8: Was there any consideration for children walking to and from school bus stops?

A: No. Unfortunately it is not possible to coordinate irrigation schedules for 78 individual neighborhoods with the various school bus schedules. Residential and/or common area watering has been occurring during school bus pick-up and delivery for years without much difficulty.

Q9: Does this new schedule permit homeowners to water daily with new sod/plantings?

A: Yes. Consult your Homeowner's Manual for guidance.

Q10: Can I water within 24 hours when lawn treatment has been applied?

A: Yes. You may water the day after a lawn treatment, during your specified time, even if it is not your specified day. Consult your Homeowner's Manual.

Q11: Will I need to change my lawn service schedule to accommodate this new schedule?

A: Possibly. If your new watering time conflicts with your current lawn service, perhaps your lawn service provider could change days or change to a slightly later time. The same might be true for your lawn chemicals provider.

Q12: We have heard that we should shut down our irrigation systems during the summer months (June through August). Is this true?

A: Yes. During the wet summer months of June-August, irrigation is seldom necessary, and usually the irrigation system can be turned off. Irrigation water from any source is not an unlimited resource, and residents should embrace conservation measures that reduce irrigation application rates during the summer rainy season, cooler winter temperature and installing technology that automatically helps reduce irrigation usage (a rain sensor or a SMS system).

Q13: I signed up for SMS so I could water twice/week. What's the status?

A: *SWFWMD* and *BRU* are collaborating together to fund at no cost to the resident the installation of up to 600 Soil Moisture Sensor (SMS) systems beginning October 1st, 2018. Our Community Association Services is maintaining a list of those residents who are interested in installing SMS systems. For more information, please contact [Gary Glass](mailto:gary.glass@lwrtownhall.com) at gary.glass@lwrtownhall.com.

Q14: I don't like my new irrigation time. Can I change it?

A: No, but we do have a suggestion. If you install a certified Soil Moisture Sensor (SMS) system, you will get a second irrigation day each week, as needed. This opposing (second) day is approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ days after your primary day, so it will be on a different day of the week and at a different time of day than your primary watering day.