

Sample Landscape and Irrigation Contract Language for HOAs



Work with landscape and/or irrigation contractors to incorporate some or all the language below into your homeowner association's (HOA's) current contracts or consider adding it to future contract scopes of work to improve your community's water efficiency outdoors. Consider your local soil type, climate, and landscape when deciding which text to include in your contracts.

Sample Contract Language for Water-Efficient Landscapes

- When significant maintenance or new construction occurs, the topsoil will be evaluated to ensure it is a sufficient quantity—4 to 6 inches deep—to capture rainfall.
- Approximately 3 inches of mulch will be added each year to plant beds and around trees to cover bare soil, helping the landscape retain water and preventing weed growth.
- Soil will be aerated once per year for areas with regular foot or vehicular traffic to improve water infiltration rates.
- The landscape will be kept free of weeds so that water is available for plants.
- Grass height will be maintained at no shorter than 2 to 3 inches tall, or as tall as is recommended by the [local Cooperative Extension Service](#), to allow for deep root growth. If possible, mowing will be done on an as-needed basis instead of at regular intervals.

Sample Contract Language for Water-Efficient Irrigation

- The following maintenance will be conducted at seasonal system start-up and once mid-season:
 - Irrigation system pressure will be checked to ensure it is within manufacturer specifications, typically between 30 and 45 pounds per square inch (psi) [207 or 310 kilopascals (kPa)], depending on irrigation emitter type.
 - As-built drawings of the irrigation system will be provided by the installer. In the case of existing systems, an irrigation system diagram, identifying shut-off valves at a minimum, will be created and provided.
 - Irrigation system components will be checked to verify efficient operation and uniform distribution of water:
 - Sprinklers will be inspected and repaired, if necessary, to ensure they are applying water at the correct arc and radius.
 - Sprinklers that are spraying on pavement or are otherwise obstructed will be re-directed to properly apply water to the landscape.
 - Drip irrigation zones will be flushed to remove foreign matter. The pressure regulator will be checked to ensure proper system pressure for drip irrigation. Emitters and tubing will be inspected to ensure nothing is clogged or damaged; any damaged components will be replaced or repaired, if necessary.

- Any installed filtration systems will be checked and cleaned, as needed.
 - A visual inspection of all system components will be conducted to check for leaks.
- The landscape will be checked for standing water, dry areas, or other signs of over-watering or under-watering, and the schedule or components will be adjusted accordingly.
- Rain and other (e.g., soil moisture, wind, freeze) sensors will be checked for proper operation.
- The irrigation controller will be scheduled to apply the least amount of water to meet the landscape's needs between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. to reduce water loss to evaporation. Schedules will follow local watering restrictions. If using a WaterSense labeled irrigation controller, the schedule will be modified automatically during the watering season based on weather and/or soil moisture data.
- Generally, irrigation events will be scheduled to apply water in larger volumes less frequently to encourage deep root growth, as long as soil and landscape type allow.
- When scheduling irrigation for zones with predominantly clay soils and/or steep slopes, [cycle and soak](#) methodology will be used (in other words, irrigation events will be separated into multiple applications for landscapes with these conditions) to prevent runoff.
- The following maintenance will be conducted monthly during the watering season:
 - With the irrigation system running, a walk-through will be performed to identify any visible repairs, replacements, or adjustments needed, and repairs will be performed. Visible signs of overwatering (e.g., excessively wet areas) or under-watering (e.g. dry spots) will be evaluated, and the irrigation controller schedule will be modified if necessary. WaterSense's [Find It, Flag It, Fix It checklist](#) will be used as a reference during the walk-through to help identify potential issues.
 - A report will be sent to the HOA with details of the prior month's weather and irrigation water use, comparing it with the data from the same month the prior year, if available. The report will also include a list of maintenance conducted during the prior month.
- The following maintenance will be conducted bi-weekly or as often as the HOA desires during the watering season:
 - If using a clock-based irrigation controller, irrigation schedules will be adjusted at least bi-weekly to ensure weather conditions are properly accounted for and landscapes aren't overwatered. The system will be programmed to supplement natural rainfall with the minimum quantity of water possible, depending on the forecast. Quantity of irrigation needed or allowed by the [local Cooperative Extension Service](#) or water utility will be considered.
 - Water meters will be read and recorded at least bi-weekly to help quickly identify leaks.
- When needed, irrigation equipment will be replaced with WaterSense labeled models (e.g., WaterSense labeled controllers, WaterSense labeled spray sprinkler bodies) and/or similar or the same equipment originally installed from the same manufacturer. Matched precipitation will be maintained within each irrigation zone.
- If the association has a landscape water budget, irrigation water use will be monitored weekly and compared to the water budget. The HOA will be notified when 80 percent, 90 percent, and 100 percent of the water budget has been used in a given month, and recommendations will be made to reduce landscape water use.