The Landscape Assessment Tool

Assessing the Lawn

The Landscape Assessment Tool (LAT) is a free and easy-to-use instrument to help you determine where you can reduce or eliminate outdoor water use. After using the Tool, the results can be used to help you get started on moving to a water-efficient landscape.

The development of this Tool is an Okanagan Xeriscape Association initiative following the release of the Okanagan Basin Water Board's (OBWB) report Okanagan Water Supply and Demand Project, Phase 2 in March 2010. This study reports Okanagan Valley residents use 525 litres of water outdoors **per day, year-round**, making us the highest water users in both British Columbia (490 litres) and Canada (329 litres). Additionally, **50% or more** of the outdoor water is applied to the lawn[1].

Most yards in the Okanagan Valley include a green space, typically a Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) lawn. This is a good area to start your Landscape Assessment.

The benefits of a lawn include:

- provides an open area for play and/or entertaining
- in the design sense, gives your eyes a 'rest' area and is a good transition planting
- between areas
- helps cool and clean the air (through the biological processes of evapotranspiration
- and photosynthesis)
- helps to control erosion and runoff

However, Kentucky Bluegrass is a foreign species and the semi-arid climate of the Okanagan presents it with tough growing conditions. It only grows well with regular and consistent irrigation.

1. Sketch the Shape of the Lawn

If you have more than one lawn area, sketch all areas and label each region "A", "B", "C", etc.

2. Calculate the Area of the Lawn (sq. ft.)

- Use the tape to measure the length and width (in feet) of your lawn.
- Multiply the length by the width – this is the area (in square feet) of your lawn.
- If you have more than one lawn area, repeat the calculation(s), then total the results.

NOTE: If you don't have a rectangular lawn, sketch the shape of the area(s), divide them into rectangular or shapes on paper, then proceed. Remember to add up your calculations to get the total area.

3. How Practical are the Lawn Areas?

Circle the number (1-4) that best described the lawn region, as shown in the Sample below. Use a separate chart (refer to page 5) for each lawn region.

REGION *A*

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	SCORE
A. Area Lawn Size dictates the amount of water required to maintain health and vigour.	Less than 600 sq. ft.	4
	More than 600 but less than 801 sq. ft.	3
	More than 800 but less than 1000 sq. ft.	2
	More than 1000 sq. ft.	①
B. Use The lawn should be well-used for an intended purpose.	Practical, high usage area, e.g., children's play area, dog run.	4
	Moderately practical, moderate usage area, e.g., outdoor entertaining, shaded seating area.	③
	Relatively practical, low usage area, e.g., pathway.	2
	No practical usage.	1
C. Location The lawn's lot placement increases or decreases its practicality.	This region is in the front, back or side yard.	④
	This region runs along the driveway, fence or sidewalk.	3
	This region is in a shady area.	2
	This region is between the sidewalk and the roadway.	1
D. Distance from House Lawn requires a lot of water; it should be near the house.	Less than 50 ft.	4
	More than 50 but less than 75 ft.	3
	More than 75 but less than 100 ft.	②
	More than 100 ft.	1
E. Lawn Shape The best lawn shape is one similar to the spray patterns of sprinklers.	Circular, square or rectangular; good sprinkler coverage.	4
	Circular, square or rectangular; fair sprinkler coverage.	3
	Irregularly-shaped with good sprinkler coverage.	②
	Long strip less than 15' wide.	1
F. Slope A slope can waste water through runoff or pooling.	This region is level, without sloped areas.	④
	This region has a gradual slope to one side.	3
	This region has more than one slope.	2
	This region has a slope of more than 5%.	1

Just for Fun …

- Estimate the amount of water, in litres or gallons, you use annually to keep your lawn green. Residents on water meters can calculate their total outdoor irrigation use by subtracting winter average use from the totals for April through October.

- Use the following table to determine your water usage. [2] The figures in this table are calculated for the commonly recommended application of 2.5 cm (1") of water per week during the irrigation season (typically April to October).

LAWN AREA in SQ. FT.	ANNUAL IRRIGATION WATER USAGE in LITRES * (GALLONS)
1000	37,551 (9,920 gal)
1500	56,327 (14,880 gal)
2000	75,102 (19,840 gal)

* After deducting the average monthly rainfall during the growing season in Kelowna.

- How close was your estimate to the actual annual average water usage? Are you surprised at the amount of water used on your lawn?

4. Score and Analyze

Total the number of 'points', region by region. Then, analyze your lawn spaces. A single region totaling less than 20 'points' is likely an area where water is being overused or wasted.

5. Review and Research

Review some of the solutions for reducing the amount of water you use on your lawn. Each option is followed by a link to more information.

- Remove some or all of the lawn. More …
- Replace or overseed with a low-water lawn seed blend such as Eco-Lawn. More …
- Xeriscape with trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials, particularly native low-water species. More …
- Replace with a low-water lawn alternative. More …
- Embrace "Gold is the New Green": allow your lawn to go dormant over the hot summer months. More …
- Create a meadow using native wildflowers and grasses. More …
- Install a patio (use a permeable product), deck, pathways, or other hardscape that does not require water. More …

[2] Based on calculations at www.wildflowerfarm.com.

THE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT TOOL: ASSESSING THE LAWN
Lawn Region Chart

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