



Long Island Watering Schedule

Season-by-season irrigation guide calibrated for Zone 7B sandy soil

USDA ZONE 7B

Sandy Loam / Sole-Source Aquifer

The #1 rule for Long Island: Your lawn needs about 1 inch of water per week (including rainfall). But on sandy soil, you can't deliver it all at once like clay. Sand drains in minutes. Split into 2-3 shorter sessions per week so the water stays in the root zone instead of draining through.

Spring

April through May

1.0 in

per week total

2x per week, 0.50 in each

Usually covered by rainfall

Start supplementing if dry 7+ days

New seed: light mist 2-3x daily

Summer

June through August

1.25 in

per week total

3x per week, 0.35-0.50 in each

Peak ET: 0.15-0.22 in/day

Or let lawn go dormant (0.50 in every 3 weeks for crown survival)

Fall

September through October

1.0 in

per week total

2x per week, 0.50 in each

Critical for new seed establishment

Reduce as temps drop below 60°F

Stop irrigation by late October

Monthly ET and Irrigation Reference (Long Island Zone 7B)

MONTH	AVG ET (IN/MO)	AVG RAINFALL (IN)	DEFICIT	IRRIGATION NEEDED	FREQUENCY
April	2.1	4.0	Surplus	Usually none	Monitor only
May	3.2	3.9	~Even	Spot water if dry 7+ days	As needed
June	3.1	3.7	~Even	0.25-0.50 in supplement	2x/week
July	3.4	3.5	Tight	0.50-1.0 in supplement	2-3x/week
August	2.9	4.2	Usually OK	Supplement in dry stretches	2x/week if dry
September	2.4	3.9	Surplus	New seed needs consistent moisture	2-3x daily (seed)

ET data from Penman-Monteith at Islip via Cornell CCE Suffolk / NRCC. Rainfall from NOAA Islip 1991-2020 normals. On sandy soil, even surplus months can have dry spells because sand doesn't store water between rain events.

Sandy soil math: LI sandy loam holds about 0.72 inches of available water in the top 6 inches (12% AWC). That's roughly 3-4 days of water supply in summer. After that, grass roots hit dry soil. This is why you water 2-3x/week on sand vs 1x/week on clay.

Suffolk County restrictions: Odd-numbered addresses water on odd calendar days. Even-numbered addresses water on even days. No watering between 10 AM and 4 PM daily. These are enforceable rules from the Suffolk County Water Authority.

1 in/week
TOTAL NEED

2-3x/week
FREQUENCY ON SAND

0.35-0.50 in
PER SESSION

Before 10 AM
BEST TIME

0.72 in AWC
SANDY SOIL CAPACITY

Catch Cup Calibration (5 Steps)

STEP	ACTION	DETAILS
1	Place cups in a grid	Set 6–8 straight-sided containers (tuna cans work) across one irrigation zone. Space evenly between heads.
2	Run zone for 15 min	Time it exactly. One zone at a time only.
3	Measure each cup	Ruler in inches. Record every cup including dry ones.
4	Calculate rate	Average all cups. Multiply by 4 = inches per hour. Example: 0.20 in avg x 4 = 0.80 in/hr.
5	Calculate run time	Run time (min) = (Target in / Rate in/hr) x 60. Need 0.50 in at 0.80 in/hr = 37.5 min.

Uniformity check: If driest cup is less than 50% of wettest, you have coverage problems. Adjust head angles, replace clogged nozzles, or add heads.

Common Sprinkler Rates

Rotary heads (Rachio, Rain Bird)	0.4-0.8 in/hr
Fixed spray heads	1.2-1.8 in/hr
MP Rotator nozzles	0.4-0.6 in/hr
Impact sprinklers	0.5-1.0 in/hr
Oscillating (hose-end)	0.5-1.0 in/hr

Estimates only. Always do the catch cup test. Your actual rate depends on pressure, spacing, nozzle condition, and wind.

Watering Best Practices

Best time to water	4-10 AM
Worst time to water	Evening (disease)
Target depth per session	0.35-0.50 in
Root zone target	Top 6 inches
Dormancy survival	0.50 in / 3 wks
New seed watering	Mist 2-3x daily
Smart controller	Rachio 3

Evening watering leaves blades wet overnight = #1 cause of brown patch and dollar spot. Finish before 10 AM.

Watering Symptom Diagnosis

SYMPTOM	LIKELY CAUSE	FIX
Blue-gray color, footprints stay	Underwatering	Increase frequency (not duration). Water more often on sand, not deeper.
Spongy thatch, mushrooms	Overwatering	Reduce frequency. Let soil dry between sessions. Aerate if compacted.
Circular brown patches, 6-24 in	Brown patch	Stop evening watering. Reduce N. Water AM only. Self-corrects below 60°F nights.
Small straw spots, 2-6 in, dew	Dollar spot	Increase N slightly (thrives on low N). Water deep, less often. AM only.
Brown along edges, near pavement	Heat radiation	Pavement reflects heat. These zones need 20-30% more water.
Green near heads, brown between	Poor uniformity	Do catch cup test. Adjust heads, fix nozzles. Target DU above 65%.

This is the paper version. Your sprinklers need real data.

AquaSync Pro calculates exact run times using your catch cup data and real-time ET. CatchCup Pro measures uniformity and finds dead spots.

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