

Testing your Sprinkler System

To use landscape water effectively, you need to know how much water your sprinkler system delivers to your lawn areas. You can get this information with a simple "catch can" test.

The **Catch Can** Test in Five Steps:

1. Set four identical cans at various distances from the sprinklers within the spray pattern of the *sprinkler zone*.^{*} Write down the location of each can. Turn on the sprinkler zone for 15 minutes.
2. After 15 minutes, turn off the zone and measure the water level in each can with a ruler. Write down the amount of water each can collected. Differences in the amount of water collected by each can will tell you if the water is being applied evenly over the sprinkler zone. Sprinkler heads can be moved or renozzled to improve the efficiency of the zone.
3. Pour the water collected from three cans into the fourth can.
4. Measure the depth of water in the fourth can. This is amount of water the sprinkler zone receives in one hour. You will need this number if you want to use evapotranspiration values to create your irrigation schedules. (For more on ET, go to the [Colorado ET](#) web site.)
5. To determine the average amount of water your sprinkler zone receives in 15 minutes, divide the number from the fourth can by four.

^{*}A zone is an area of your landscape that is watered by one valve off the clock.

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