



Sprinkler Systems 101

Your sprinkler system is a critical tool your landscape watering efforts, and that makes it a critical part of your water conservation efforts.

Proper and timely maintenance is essential for sprinkler systems. To help, we've compiled this one-page guide to Sprinkler Maintenance (PDF). In addition, we offer these guidelines to help you get the most out of your sprinkler system — while doing the most you can to conserve water.

Choose a Water-wise Irrigation System

To conserve water, your irrigation system should send large drops of water close to the ground, which can be 30% more water-efficient than spraying a fine mist that will drift easily in a light wind and evaporate more readily in summer heat. We recommend rotor heads or drip systems, rather than less-efficient pop-up spray heads. Drip irrigation is a great alternative for trees, shrubs, perennials and groundcovers.

Get Into the "Zone"

Automatic sprinkler systems have multiple "zones," each controlled by its own solenoid valve. To program your system, simply set your controller, the "brain" of your system. There are three types of controllers: electro-mechanical, solid state and hybrid. The most popular type of residential controllers is hybrid, which combines the versatility of solid-state operation with the convenience of mechanical programming.

Program Your Sprinkler System

Automatic sprinkler systems aren't completely automatic. For example, they don't adjust themselves when the weather gets hotter, or when it rains. Set a base schedule that provides 1" per week in lawn areas (less for shrub and tree zones) and adjust that schedule regularly according to weekly weather trends. Most controllers have a 'water budget' or 'percent adjustment' feature that makes adjusting your schedule a very easy process.

Rain Sensors

Rain sensors save water and money. When a rain sensor detects a predetermined amount of effective rainfall it interrupts the common circuit that operates the electronic valves until the water from the rain has evaporated. When the water has evaporated, the rain sensor restores the common circuit and the controller will resume turning the system on and off.

Cross Connection (Backflow) Protection

All irrigation systems are required to have backflow protection installed. Backflow protection prevents the mixing of irrigation water that may have been exposed to fertilizers and other outdoor chemicals with drinking water. Contact your local [water provider](#) for specific information regarding cross connection rules and regulations - be sure to ask for the cross connection or back flow specialist.

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Water. Save a little. Help a lot