

Sprinkler Maintenance

Irrigation systems are not the “set and forget” systems we’ve been led to believe. Each fall, you should shut down your system for the winter. And spring is the time to start checking your sprinkler system for peak summer performance — one of the most important things you can do to keep your system operating efficiently.

Here’s what to do each spring:

- Close all manual drains (the sprinkler system was probably drained the previous fall) and make sure none of the manual drain valves have been left open.
- Slowly open the main valve, allowing the piping from the main valve to the backflow prevention assembly to fill with water.
- Have the backflow prevention assembly tested by a state-certified tester; many local water providers can supply a list of testers. Contact your local water provider for requirements.
- Pressurize the mainline from the backflow prevention assembly to the control valves. Have one of the control valves open while you do this, so air trapped in the piping can escape through the sprinkler heads as the pipes fill with water.
- Run the entire sprinkler system, one zone at a time. As you do this, check the following:
 - Look for signs of leakage, which can be caused by damage to the heads or piping during the winter months. Repair as needed.
 - The spray pattern of the sprinklers can be inefficient. Sometimes nozzles get clogged and need to be cleaned. Also, nozzles and sprinkler heads may need adjustments to reduce overspray onto walks, driveways, etc.
 - Interference of the spray pattern can occur if plants have been moved, play equipment has been installed or plants have grown too tall. Adjusting the sprinklers to accommodate the changing landscape will eliminate dry spots and puddling caused by blocked spray.
 - Overgrown grass can impede spray heads; make sure to keep yours trimmed. Also, check for leaning spray heads.

By following these simple guidelines, you can have a healthy lawn and garden all summer — while conserving water!