



IRRIGATION MAINTENANCE

Hi, I'm Steve and I'm Jesse for the Regional Water Providers Consortium. Every spring thousands of people in Portland metro area turn on their automatic irrigation systems and unfortunately they do little else to make sure they're performing properly.

Steve: Failing to maintain and tune your irrigation system can result in high water bills and even worse, a waste of potable water. Here are some irrigation tips that are easy to perform and can save you money on your water bill.

Jesse: Heads that are damaged or plugged can leak large amounts of water and the spray patterns will usually not be uniform. This can create swampy, over watered, and/or dry areas, as the water is not being applied evenly or adequately in some spots. To correct this unplug the nozzle by removing it and clearing debris. Taping it on a hard surface will dislodge dirt and debris from the nozzle ports. If it is damaged replace it with the same type and size. It is a good idea to be consistent with your sprinkler and parts manufacturer because not all brands are interchangeable.

Steve: Watering areas that don't need water, such as walks, streets, or driveways not only waste water, it can erode and damage the surface and undermine the foundation bed and create potholes. Watering paved surfaces can also wash brake dust, automobile oils, and sludge into the storm system, which eventually pollutes our lakes and streams.

You can correct this by regularly observing your system and operating zone by zone and making adjustments so that the water you're paying for is going where it's needed.

Jesse: As landscapes mature, it's only a matter of time until sprinklers start to be blocked or obstructed by surrounding plants. This can result in overwatering close to the sprinkler head and under watering in areas that are being obstructed. This problem can be remedied a couple of different ways. Depending on your system layout, you can either install taller sprinklers or relocate the sprinklers or plants.

Steve: Runoff is typically caused by overwatering. Excessively irrigating hillsides and watering at a rate that applies water faster than the soil can absorb it, are generally at the root of runoff problems. Turf needs on average 1 inch of water weekly. To avoid runoff, learn how to gauge the amount of water your sprinkler system applies and adjust the controller appropriately. Turn on a zone and time how long it takes before puddles and runoff occur. That is the longest period at one cycle you should water that particular area. Use multiple start times with a 1 hour soak in between to give the soil the time it needs to absorb the water being applied and thereby minimizing runoff.

Jesse: High pressure can account for a 10%-20% increase in water usage. When water is applied at high pressure, water droplets become very small, resulting in a spray that appears misty. This makes the spray much more likely to drift where it is not intended.

To remedy this problem, install a pressure compensating device in either the nozzle, the sprinkler body, or the control valve.

These tips if performed regularly can easily save you 10%-15% on your water bill.

Steve: It can also improve the overall health and appearance of your landscape and reduce the impact our landscapes have on the rivers and streams of our Oregon home.

For more information on improving irrigation efficiency in your landscape visit the Regional Water Providers Consortium website at ConserveH2O.org.

The instructional videos listed on our website are general guidelines. The Regional Water Providers Consortium will not be responsible for any damage to your home, landscape, or appliances from following the procedures in these videos. If you have concerns doing any of this work yourself, you may wish to seek the services of a professional plumber or contractor.