



Media Contact
Mary Eva Tredway / Tyre Sperling
mtredway@duffey.com / tsperling@duffey.com
404-446-1673 / 404-446-1670

Lawn and Garden Irrigation Systems – What You Need to Know
- waterSmart's best practices for watering systems save residents gallons and dollars -

ATLANTA (July 18, 2007) – July is Smart Irrigation Month, and to help Georgians water their lawns and gardens efficiently, waterSmart, a water conservation education program, is offering information on professionally installed home irrigation systems. When properly installed and managed, they require less labor, time and use less water than manual watering to keep your landscape healthy. And with Georgia still in a drought, irrigation systems can be very helpful in keeping your landscape hydrated while following the outdoor water use schedule adopted by your local water provider.

Although there are many benefits to irrigation systems, they can waste water and even damage your lawn when not properly installed and operated. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates up to 50 percent of water used for landscaping is lost due to evaporation, runoff, or over-watering. By learning more about the options and techniques of lawn and garden irrigation, homeowners will be able to save water, save time and save money.

The amount of water your lawn or flowerbeds need varies depending on the types of plants and turf you use. Try to group vegetation with similar water requirements so that you can program your irrigation system to dispense just the right amount of water. Look for native plants that are more suitable to the natural climate and require less supplemental watering. Also, consider the size and shape of the area that needs supplemental watering in order to have a water-efficient healthy lawn. If you do not take into account the proper dimensions, you may end up having an irrigation system that reaches too far or falls short.

The two primary types of landscape irrigation systems are sprinkler and drip. The most customary types of sprinklers used in landscape irrigation are spray heads and rotating sprinklers. On average, rotary sprinklers require 35 to 50 PSI of water pressure, whereas spray heads only need 25 to 45 PSI of water pressure to operate. When using sprinklers it is important to know the reach of each sprinkler as it will affect the spacing and arrangement most suitable for your yard; they are normally arranged in a square or triangular pattern.

-MORE-

Drip irrigation systems utilize devices called emitters to supply a steady, yet slow, flow of water to plants. According to The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, this system of watering is an effective way to reduce water losses and ensure uniform hydration. The drip method is suitable for many landscapes but is not best for those with shallow rooted plants such as grass and ground covers.

If you have an irrigation system installed, it is important to know how to operate the system so that you can turn it off when it is raining or reschedule it to comply with the current watering schedule in your area. The certified irrigation professional who installs the system should provide you with irrigation controllers to turn water on and off and a blueprint that maps out your system. To effectively operate your controller, you need to set a base schedule or default schedule, which is programmed to provide the correct amount of water under normal conditions. Then, you can adjust the base schedule and system controller as needed to accommodate periods of rain or normal weather patterns when you don't have to utilize supplemental watering.

Local weather patterns play an important role in your irrigation system's schedule, as it affects the amount of water needed and can change on a daily or weekly basis. Be sure to plan your irrigation system based on the current weather patterns so as not to over- or under-water your landscape. "In Georgia, irrigation supplements rainfall, and most months rain is sufficient enough that irrigation isn't needed every day," said Rose Mary Seymour of the University of Georgia's Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department. To easily prevent running sprinklers while it is raining, install a rain sensor shut-off device or automatic shut-off switch from your local hardware store on any new or old automatic irrigation system.

It is always important to research the professional credits of any home contractor, and irrigation systems are no different. Irrigation professionals can confirm their knowledge of water efficiency and accurate irrigation system design, installation and maintenance and/or system auditing through certification from the Irrigation Association. When seeking landscape irrigation services, look for certified irrigation professionals that partner with the U.S. EPA WaterSense program to ensure water-efficient irrigation.

Many factors determine what irrigation system is best for your home. "Wasting water through poor irrigation design is like watching your dollars go down the drain," said U.S. EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. "Learn as much as possible about the available options so that you can select and manage a system that keeps your lawn healthy while conserving water."

-MORE-

For more information about water conservation, please visit www.ConserveWaterGeorgia.net or www.waterSmart.net. For more information on certified irrigation professionals, please visit www.irrigation.org or www.epa.gov/watersense.

About waterSmart

The waterSmart program was developed in conjunction with the Georgia Water Wise Council and the Cobb County Cooperative Extension Service. It is endorsed by the Georgia Green Industry Association and the Georgia Turf Association, as well as numerous lawn and garden experts. The waterSmart program also has partnered with DNR and the Education Roundtable to provide additional education and outreach tools aimed at reducing outdoor water use.

###