

Irrigation For The Season

By: Melinda Sperl

Just starting your irrigation system each year without any regard to the time of year will not only waste water it can seriously damage your plants. Store shelves are covered with fungus treatments this time of year, usually the result of over-watering. Yellowing leaves are the first sign of fungal problems from over-watering. Of course we can't control the rain but our nights are still cool enough now so there is no need to have your irrigation system on more than one *maybe* two days a week. Yet, I have already seen yards watering every day, watering during the middle of the day (which is the most inefficient time of day) and watering the street. I am also seeing yards that need drainage because of too much irrigation.

Last year we should have learned a few things about watering our lawns - water less but water deeper. Grass typically has shorter roots than plants so it needs more surface moisture. I am often asked how long you should water your lawn and it really depends on your soil quality more than any other problem you have. Trees also can be a factor but not always because of shade and more because of them stealing moisture from the surface. The point is that all yards are different and have different water needs. Watering your yard as much as your plants and grass needs and just until the water runs off is how long you should water.

Installing a rain sensor will also stop your irrigation system from running during the rainy season. They are cheap to install and will shut your system down until your lawn needs to be watered again.

Most irrigation systems will allow you to water a particular irrigation zone and then run that zone again for really good water penetration without run off. If you are not sure how to do this, talk to your irrigator. Your grass on needs about 1" per week and never needs water every day.

Another reason for deep watering vs. shallow daily watering is your trees. Daily surface watering focuses only on the grass and will not give the trees enough deep water. This is believed to be the reason for the decline of our neighborhood trees. The trees roots are growing near the soil surface where the plentiful water is and not in the deep ground as they should which is causing unstable trees prone to falling, drought and disease.

Happy Gardening!

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