

## Irrigation vs. Rain Water

By: Melinda Sperl

Do you ever wonder why your plants do so much better when we have a year with rain? Even if you watered like crazy during a drought season your plants look sickly this year.

Part of the problem is the level of salt in the water in our irrigation systems. Salt is deadly to plants as it will restrict the water and nutrient uptake by the root systems. Crape Myrtles and Red Oaks are especially susceptible to this problem.

The more irrigation plants get without natural rain water to wash out the minerals can make the difference in having a buildup of caustic chemicals in your lawn. You may notice yellowing of leaves (chlorotic), lack of blooms, slow growth rates and a general lack luster appearance of your plants.

Irrigation systems on water wells are especially susceptible to high salt and mineral levels and should be closely monitored.

Less frequent but heavier irrigation is the best solution to avoid salt and mineral build up. Daily irrigation is always to be avoided as this would cause a high accumulation of salt and mineral on the soil surface.

Even though the Houston area is not in the same critical stage of water conservation as the rest of the state it is still important and just because water is available does not mean the improper use of it will not come with consequences. Having that perfect green lawn in the middle of a drought can mean yellow plants in the following year.

The recommendation is to irrigate less frequently but heavier. Do a soil test to determine your salt and mineral levels. Add organic materials as needed to help your plants absorb nutrients.

Happy Gardening!

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