



Water Smart Irrigation Tips

Reaching your Roots

Plants have different rooting depths and watering requirements. In general, annuals and grasses have roots extending down up to 12 inches, shrubs 24 inches, and trees 36 inches. Any water applied beyond the root zones is water the plant can't use. Most desert-adapted plants require less frequent watering than non-desert species.

A soil probe is a metal rod, such as a piece of rebar, or a long handled screwdriver, used to measure how deep the water has penetrated the soil after an irrigation. Simply push the probe, metal rod, or longer handled screwdriver into the ground after you irrigate. It will easily push through wet soil and stop as dry soil is encountered. This provides you with a simple method to determine if your length of irrigation is sufficient.

Periodically check the soil with the probe to determine when it is time to irrigate again. Once the soil is dried out, the probe will become more difficult to push into the ground.

Water Early

Cooler temperatures in the earliest part of the morning help to reduce evaporation losses from various irrigation systems. This is also usually the least windy time of day, so sprinkler systems will spray water more efficiently.

Watch your Watering

Leaks, missing drip emitters or broken sprinkler heads can seriously affect the performance of your irrigation system. Besides allowing water to be wasted, these problems can result in plants not receiving sufficient moisture deeper in the root zone. Also, since most systems run early in the morning, or at other times when no one is around to look for leaks or other problems, it is a good idea to periodically turn the irrigation system on and observe for problems.

Reuse the Rain

There are several simple things one can do to take advantage of rainfall to supplement your landscape irrigation. Building berms around plants, diverting runoff from rooftops and walkways to plants, and using containers to store rainwater.

The summer heat can make it tough on new plants. New landscape plantings require more frequent watering to establish strong root systems. If you are planning to change your landscaping, do the work in the cooler months of the year. Your new plants will do better and you'll need less water to get them established.

Turn on a Timer

An irrigation timer can help you save water in your landscape. Establish an appropriate irrigation schedule for your site conditions, and learn how to set the schedule into your timer. Also, don't forget to make periodic adjustments to account for changing water requirements as the seasons change.