



# Watering Basics and Irrigation Maintenance

## **WATERING BASICS**

Day length, soil type, temperature, rainfall, and winds all influence how much and how often you should water. New plantings - even natives - will probably require additional hand watering for a year or two if they are on an existing irrigation system with well-established plants. Once your native and/or drought-adapted plants become established in your new garden, their watering needs will decrease. The amount of water that plants need changes over the course of the seasons.

Your plants' water needs will be influenced by the water-holding capacity of your soil. To see how well your soil can hold moisture, use a spade to open some ground before and after you have watered. Feel the soil for moistness. Look to see how far below the surface the moisture extends. The goal is to water the entire depth of the root system. (Note: some plants are deeper-rooted than others, so this depth will vary according to plants). Applying compost and mulch will increase your soil's organic content, improve its water-holding capacity, and keep the soil cool.

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR WATERING**

- Look for signs of under or overwatering. Yellow and limp or wilting plants may indicate overwatering; brown and crispy may indicate underwatering.
- Map your drip system for future maintenance and repairs.
- Turn off your irrigation during the rainy season – usually November to March.
- During dry winters California natives may need to be irrigated.

## **PERIODICALLY INSPECT IRRIGATION LINES**

- Work with one irrigation station at a time.
- Walk the lines and ensure there are no breaks or leaks. Turn the station on and LISTEN!
- Identify and replace any malfunctioning dripline or drip emitters.
- Identify where the line is around plants, especially trees and shrubs. As plants grow, move the line closer to the outside canopy.
- Ensure emitters are at least 4"-6" away from the base/trunk of trees and shrubs.
- If a plant has grown, consider adding more dripline or individual emitters.

## **SPRING DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM MAINTENANCE**

- Turn your system off. If necessary, pull drip lines up to the surface for inspection and always before adding more mulch.
- Remove end caps/closures of the water lines.
- Turn system on and run water until clear stream of water flows from lines. Turn system off.
- Visually inspect valves and remove and rinse off/flush screens and filters.
- Put all components of the system back together. Turn system on and check for proper operation.

## **SPRING IRRIGATION CONTROLLER/SENSORS/VALVES MAINTENANCE**

- Open and clean the filters on your valves. If you use well water, you may need to perform this task frequently.
- From your controller, turn each valve on. Ensure each one turns on and off and is not leaking.
- Ensure each valve runs for the specified period of time.
- Review the irrigation schedule and make sure each zone is set appropriately. Make sure your irrigation programs do not overlap.
- Replace the battery in the controller, if applicable.

## **SPRING HOSE BIB TIMER MAINTENANCE**

- Install a new battery in your hose bib timer and reinstall in the garden.
- Open and clean the associated filter. If you use well water, you may need to perform this task frequently.
- Program the timer.
- Run the timer to make sure it is working properly.

## **WINTER IRRIGATION CONTROLLER/SENSORS/VALVES MAINTENANCE**

- Turn the controller off.
- From your controller, turn each valve on. Ensure each one turns on and off and is not leaking.
- Ensure each valve runs for the specified period of time.

## **WINTER HOSE BIB TIMER MAINTENANCE**

- Turn the hose bib timer off.
- Remove the battery and store the timer indoors.

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