

Smart Irrigation Increases Outdoor Water Efficiency

Outdoor water use in the Valley rises in the heat of summer. We know the key to maintaining your landscape's health and beauty is watering correctly, but that can be a bit of a challenge in the desert and escalating heat. What it comes down to is being smart with your irrigation use.

July is [Smart Irrigation Month](#) and a perfect time to inspect your irrigation system to ensure it is running efficiently and effectively. Taking the proper steps will better ensure your landscape will continue to thrive but without wasting precious water.

Here are a few basic guidelines to increase the efficiency of your irrigation system, which in the end, will save you time, water, and money.



Drip System

Drip systems are always a work in progress and need to be checked and maintained regularly. A consistent maintenance schedule will identify issues such as underground pipes that can crack and leak, tubes leading to plants that were cut by tools or simply broke due to age, and emitters that can fall off or get clogged with dirt.

It's also important to look at your emitters because many of them are commonly used on drip systems that don't control pressure. As a result, plants closer to the irrigation valve or at the bottom of a slope get overwatered from a heavier flow. Other plants may start looking weary because they are getting too little water, or the water is running off too quickly to be absorbed. A typical response is to overwater the entire yard, which will not adequately address the issue. Instead, look for inexpensive "pressure compensating emitters." These will also slow the flow rate, so the water sinks deep into the root.

Sprinkler System

If sprinkler heads are not appropriately spaced, overwatering and even underwatering can occur, leaving yellow patches and uneven growth. To maximize the efficiency of your sprinkler system, make sure the heads are spaced correctly and don't forget to put sprinkler heads in the corners of your yard to keep grass evenly green.

The most efficient sprinkler nozzle is called a "stream rotor nozzle." Instead of a single stream of water, these sprinkler nozzles use multiple fingers of water. As a result, they cover the area evenly, and their reach is more flexible. If you inherited a poorly spaced sprinkler system,

installing these nozzles could extend a sprinkler's reach and restore the health of yellow patches without overwatering the rest of the turf or rearranging the heads.

Irrigation Controller

The efficiency of an automated irrigation controller or timer depends on the operator. It saves water if the person who sets the timer understands the needs of the plants and trees in each zone. It is also important to remember that plant watering needs vary from month to month. Regularly adjusting your [irrigation schedule](#) is an easy way to save water and money and helps ensure your plants get the right amount of water to thrive. Irrigation frequency should be adjusted at least four times a year to account for differences in seasonal watering needs. So make sure you understand how to program your controller correctly, or you can always rely on a [landscape or irrigation professional](#) for help. And if you do not currently have a smart controller, your water provider may provide a [rebate](#) that will help increase your outdoor water use efficiency.

With a better understanding of how to be smart with your irrigation, you will now be able to keep your landscape healthy while ensuring you are efficient with your outdoor water use, even with the scorching summer temperatures.

For additional resources and information, visit our [conservation pages](#).

For over 50 years, the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association has worked to protect our member cities' ability to provide assured, safe, and sustainable water supplies to their communities. For more information, visit www.amwua.org.