



Landscape Irrigation Self-Auditing Instructions

Automatic irrigation (sprinkler) systems require regular monitoring to ensure that they are running efficiently. Systems with broken or misaligned spray heads not only waste water, but can ruin a landscape. Proper controller settings are also essential to a healthy landscape. Below are a few simple instructions for evaluating your in-ground sprinkler system and setting your irrigation controller:

Step One: Familiarize yourself with your controller box

- Make note of the type of controller you have (if you do not have an instruction manual for your controller, you can find the information on-line from the manufacturer's web site, or you can order a copy from the manufacturer).
- Check how many stations are running.
- Make sure the clock is set correctly.
- Check and replace the battery annually.

Record the current settings on your controller prior to starting the self audit.

Step Two: Test the coverage in your different zones

- Place several straight sided cans (cat food or tuna cans work well), throughout one zone. You may wish to mark the can on the inside like a rain gauge with markings at $\frac{1}{4}$ ", $\frac{1}{2}$ ", $\frac{3}{4}$ ", and 1".
- Turn on your first station on for 15 minutes. Record how much water is in each can. This will tell you whether you have even coverage throughout the zone, as well as how long you need to run your sprinklers to put out $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of water.

Repeat this step for each station

Step Three: While the water is running, test your zones for these problems:

1. Heads that spray onto a sidewalk, driveway, or road.
2. Heads that are not operating or have reduced water flow.
3. Heads that may be broken at their base or gushing out the top—this wastes water and can damage plants if the rest of the spray heads become under-pressurized.
4. Heads slanted or at an angle—this results in uneven coverage).
5. Heads that cause a cloud of mist—over pressurized systems cause misting that can result in up to 25% wasted water.
6. Areas that are receiving very little water—this can be cause by poor head spacing, improper pressure, broken heads or leaking pipes.

Step Four: Take note of the following and determine your landscape watering needs:

- Which zone each station waters and what kind of plant material is in the zone (grass or shrubs).
- How much sunlight each zone receives (full sun, part sun, or shade).

To Schedule an
Irrigation Check Up
contact:

LCRA Customer
Service

1-877-718-4396

Watering requirements are based on soil type, plant choice, weather conditions, season and local landscape conditions (i.e. sun/shade, slopes or poor drainage). No landscape should require irrigation more often than twice a week, even during the hottest days of summer. If you find that your landscape requires more water, it is possible that you have insufficient soil depth to accommodate landscape plants. In that case you will want to increase your soil depth through top-dressing.

LCRA recommends the following watering schedule:

Odd numbered addresses: Wednesdays and Saturdays

Even numbered addresses: Thursday and Sunday

Watering times: 7:00 PM to Midnight and Midnight to 10:00 AM

Turf generally has a higher watering requirement than shrubs and areas of well native or well adapted perennials. Sunny areas will have a higher water requirement than shaded areas.

In areas with the highest water requirements, you will want to put out ½ inch of water twice a week.

In shaded areas or areas with native or adapted landscape plants you will want to apply ½ inch of water no more than once a week.

Use the information obtained from your can collection test to see how long you need to run each station in order to apply ½ inch of water. Rotor type heads take longer to put out 1/2 inch of water than pop-up type spray heads.

Use a “cycle and soak” feature on sloped areas to apply water in intervals giving it time to soak in rather than running off.

Turn off your irrigation system for the winter (November through February) and use a budget feature to reduce your water use to 50% in March and again in September and October. During these cooler, wetter seasons, the landscape requires very little (if any) supplemental water.

Step Five: Make repairs on your system as soon as possible

If you plan to hire a professional to make repairs, use an irrigator licensed by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

For more information regarding irrigation systems, please visit our website:

http://www.lcra.org/water/landscape_irrigation.html

**If you have questions, please call (512) 473-3200 ext. 2230,
or contact us by email at watercon@lcra.org**