

Dripping Springs Water Supply Corporation: “Irrigation Awareness”

Published July 1, 2020

I’m just not sure what else I’d want to be doing this tepid summer morning other than sitting on my front porch swing appreciating the sounds of the morning rain tapping on the metal roof and watching a small puddle gurgling at the base of my gutter spout; good morning Dripping Springs!

It is these gray rainy mornings that reminds me that I need to unwrap my pipes and turn on my irrigation sprinkler system, readying myself for another Hill Country summer blaze. It was back in early October when I shut down my home irrigation system knowing it was time for the lawn to go dormant soon. Why irrigate when winter rains provide just enough water for my yard and trees. Besides, I knew two things for sure heading into winter: my water bill would go down and my wastewater averaging would be less- just another way to save money and water. As a side note, “wastewater averaging” is calculated by averaging water used during December through February. If your wastewater average, during these three months, exceeds one LUE (6,450 gallons), then your wastewater billing will increase.

I am rain-optimistic and I wait as long as possible into the new year before I fire up my irrigation system. It really depends on our receiving spring rains. Helping me to irrigate each week is my faithful irrigation control timer unit. You know it’s that dull colored plastic box hanging on the wall in the garage, with all the rotating dials. Now that you have found yours, it is time to get to know the control timer-unit and how it can help you. Since there are so many manufacturers of these units, you will need to become familiar with your unique brand. If you have lost the instructions and they are nowhere to be found, you may be able to locate a manual online. The following links are some popular irrigation brands: www.rainbird.com www.hunterindustries.com www.thetoro.com

Once you can isolate and run a section of your sprinkler system at a time, cycle through each section and look for “grass geysers”, misdirected sprinkler heads, flowing water or water hitting inanimate objects. Before you inspect your system, you may also want to prepare yourself beforehand with the right aquatic attire. Additionally, I make sure to have white plastic forks handy to mark locations of problematic sprinkler heads. It is so much easier to locate marked sprinkler heads once the water is turned off, plus repairing sprinkler heads will lower your monthly water bill.

Once you are satisfied your sprinkler heads are spraying properly, it is now time to dial in “frequency”. Check with your HOA or water provider to see if there are active drought declarations or any watering restrictions; twice a week watering schedules for example. During different times of the year, generally July-September, droughts impact Central Texas causing watering curtailments with updated watering schedules. If there are watering restrictions in place, make sure you are aware of which days and what time you may water and update your irrigation control timer unit to correspond with the latest requirements.

Additional tools you can add to your water “toolbox” of savings are rain sensors and soil moisture sensors. Most irrigation systems come with a rain sensor; these devices suspend irrigation if rain is detected. Perhaps a more accurate, sophisticated and water saving device is the soil moisture sensor. It too will suspend irrigation, but it determines an irrigation event based on soil moisture content verses a random rain event. These devices will lessen the need to water your lawn and will lower your monthly water bill. You may want to take advantage of these and other water saving devices by exploring LCRA’s “WaterSmart” rebate program WaterSmart@lcra.org

Be sure to inspect your irrigation system each spring or hire a professional to give your sprinkler system a thorough inspection. Any irrigation company worth their weight in salt will run through the entire irrigation system, so you can skip the white fork effort if you are planning to hire a professional. DSWSC would like to remind our members to contact our office, 512-858-7897, if you have updated your personal contact information such as email addresses and phone numbers. Thank you for taking the time to not only read this article, but for helping DSWSC serve you more effectively.