

# Irrigation 101

## Spring Irrigation Check Up

Springtime's colors are already peeking out as local lawns and gardens begin their transformation from winter to the early growing season.

This is the perfect time to make sure your outdoor irrigation system is in good working condition. Here are a few helpful tips that could make your system more efficient.



### Preventive Maintenance

Check and clean your irrigation hardware including sprinkler heads and all connectors. Rust and dirt deposits can clog systems if left unchecked over a period of years.

Position broadcast sprinkler heads to avoid paved surfaces.

If your system uses an automatic timer, make sure it's working properly by timing the system with a separate watch. Replace the batteries to preserve your timer settings.

## Plan For Summer Use

Use this Formula to *Estimate* YOUR Irrigation Usage and BUDGET for the summer months



Multiply the following numbers to estimate your WEEKLY Water Usage for IRRIGATION.

1. The number of zones on your irrigation system
2. The number of times you run your system each day
3. The number of minutes the system runs
4. The number of days per week
5. 15 gallons per minute is the average flow of water at your meter

**Example:** Osmo has 5 zones on his system. He runs it in the morning for 20 minutes per zone 4 days per week.

$$5 \times 1 \times 20 \times 4 \times 15 = \mathbf{6000} \text{ Gallons Per Week}$$

Multiply that number by the number of weeks in the month to estimate your monthly irrigation usage.

$$6000 \times 4 = 24,000 \text{ Gallons Per Month}$$

Don't forget to add your normal household usage to your total if you do not have a separate irrigation meter.

## WATER-WISE LANDSCAPING IDEAS



This is a great time of year to start planning new landscape projects. If your looking for plant material ideas, consider using plants that are native to the South

Carolina Lowcountry. Ornamental grasses, palmetto, scrub palm, wax myrtle and flowers such as gaillardias and black-eyed susans (pictured) can enliven any landscape and need little to no watering once established. Check with a local garden center for more information to learn more about what plants would work best for you.



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## Super Summer Saver Tips:

1. Water between 3AM and 6AM. During the heat of the day much of the water is lost to evaporation.
2. Use drip irrigation systems instead of a hose.
3. Make your own drip irrigation device by placing holes randomly in a water hose 2-3 inches apart using a nail or ice pick., snake the hose through the bed and turn the faucet to about 1/4 open, just enough for a small flow. A hose that runs wide open uses between 5 and 8 gallons per minute.
4. Check for turf obstruction and broken equipment.
5. Check for dirt or debris in the case nozzle.
6. Check for excessive water pressure or inadequate water pressure which may be a sign of trouble in your system.
7. Verify your timer, check the number of days it is to run, the amount of time it should run and how many times per day you want it to run.

If you can't find the leak, call a professional or check online for trouble shooting tips like this one.

Leaking around the stem (also known as "blow by"). This is usually caused by debris between the wiper seal and stem. A quick way to solve this problem is to step down lightly on the stem while the sprinkler is in operation. This causes water to flush quickly between the stem and cap, taking the debris with it. If this doesn't work, the cap is probably damaged and needs to be replaced.

If the sprinkler is leaking you may need to replace worn washers and seals.

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## Check your backflow device for leaks

On June 13, 2000 the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control required all new residential irrigation meters be protected with a backflow prevention assembly. The MPW Commission amended the Backflow Prevention Guidelines to also include meters installed before this date. If you have an irrigation system that is tied to the public water supply, your irrigation meter must have a backflow preventer to protect the MPW water system from potential contamination.

## Irrigation 101 Spring Check Up

An irrigation system should be checked each spring before use to make sure it was not damaged by frost or freezing.

*An irrigation system that has a leak 1/32nd of an inch in diameter (about the thickness of a dime) can waste about 6,300 gallons of water per month.*

To ensure that your in-ground irrigation system is not leaking water, consult with a Water Sense irrigation partner who has passed a certification program focused on water efficiency; visit [www.epa.gov/watersense/meet\\_our\\_partners.html](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/meet_our_partners.html) for a complete list of irrigation partners.

Check your garden hose for leaks at its connection to the spigot. If it leaks while you run your hose, replace the nylon or rubber hose washer and ensure a tight connection to the spigot using pipe tape and a wrench.

Lock your outside faucets when you plan an extended vacation to avoid unauthorized persons from turning them on. Visit your local hardware store for tips on how to secure your faucets.

It is a good idea when you travel to turn off the water at your meter. Using a meter key that can be obtained at your local hardware store turn the meter valve one quarter of a turn in either direction. If you are unable to turn your meter off contact customer service at [customerservice@mpwonline.com](mailto:customerservice@mpwonline.com) and we will be happy to assist you.

