Use water wisely in the landscape

There’s no doubt summer is here and planning to stay a while. With near triple-digit heat across much of the state, irrigating the landscape is a must this time of year. Although parts of the state have received much-needed rainfall, keeping the landscape irrigated is vital, but you don’t want to waste water.

Keeping your landscape watered doesn’t have to cost an arm and a leg. To conserve water inside the house, people turn off the water while brushing their teeth, run the dishwasher only when it’s full and make sure the washing machine is full before turning it on. The same principle applies outdoors, as well.

Today’s in-ground irrigation systems include sophisticated controllers that allow you to easily adjust watering schedules to fit a variety of needs.

Homeowners need to take into account the amount of sun and shade exposure in the landscape and set the irrigation system accordingly. The type of soil in the landscape is another consideration. Depending on your landscape, different zones in the irrigation system will almost always need different schedules.

The type of soil in the landscape determines how quickly water can be absorbed without runoff. Watering more than the soil can absorb causes runoff and waste, which can be costly over time.

Make sure the sprinkler heads are pointed in the direction you want them to be. Direct the water to the plants, shrubs and lawn areas. If the irrigation heads are spraying water onto the driveway, sidewalks or other hard surfaces, adjust them so they hit the intended target, whether that’s the lawn or flowerbeds.

While some people think more is better, that’s not the case when it comes to irrigating your landscape. Good horticultural practices call for wetting the root zones and letting the soil dry out. Watering too much and too often results in shallow root systems, weed growth, disease and fungus.

You might think the time of day you irrigate doesn’t matter as long as the plants are getting a drink. However, homeowners can prevent water loss by watering at the appropriate time. If your irrigation system is set to water during the heat of the day, you’re likely losing up to 30 percent of the moisture to evaporation. The same is true when watering the traditional way with a hose and sprinkler. Help prevent water loss by watering near sunup and when the winds are calm.
Something else to consider is setting the automated system to cycle through the zones. For example, let’s say you determine a zone needs to run 15 minutes to receive the needed water. Instead of running for 15 minutes straight, run the system for three, five-minute intervals. This allows the soil to absorb the moisture, thus, reducing runoff.

Finally, get familiar with the settings on the irrigation controller and adjust the watering schedule regularly based on current weather conditions. It’s going to be hot for several more weeks, so regular watering is a must. However, check the weather for possible rain and adjust the watering schedule accordingly. Or, invest in a smart controller so your system can make these changes automatically.

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