Check irrigation system to help ensure efficiency

There’s nothing quite like an Oklahoma summer. Warm temperatures, often in the triple digits, coupled with little to no rainfall, can really stress the landscape. This is why it’s important to make sure your irrigation system is in good working order.

A simple irrigation checkup will help ensure the system is working properly, as well as help reduce outdoor water usage.

For those with an irrigation system, you know it certainly can help with the watering tasks for the landscape. But, if it isn’t working properly, it can be more of a hindrance than a help.

To start the checkup, begin with the controller settings. For those who live in areas that may be facing citywide water rationing, be sure to set the controller to water only on allowed days. Watering early in the morning is best, so adjust the timer on the controller accordingly.

Check each zone of the system individually and run it through a 3-minute test cycle. Check for leaks in the sprinkler heads. Repair any issues you find. When running a test, also observe exactly where the water is landing. Adjust as needed to ensure you’re not watering the foundation of your home, sidewalks or even the street in your neighborhood.

Periodically throughout the growing season, make sure your plants haven’t grown so much they now interfere with the water flow of the irrigation system. This can cause an uneven spray pattern and decrease water efficiency.

If you notice your sprinkler heads are dispersing water in more of a mist instead of a stream, you’re likely dealing with excessive or high water pressure. Adjust the sprinkler heads accordingly. If you discover puddles of water, you could have a sprinkler head that is stuck and not fully popping up above the ground, or it is leaking at the base.

A simple irrigation checkup is as important as selecting the right plants, using fertilizer and proper pest management. Doing a systemwide check once a year can help identify problems that can cause water waste. Fixing issues will improve efficiency, conserve water and likely even lower your water bill.

For more information about performing an irrigation checkup, see Oklahoma State University’s fact sheet HLA-6615 Simple Irrigation Checkup for Home Sprinkler Systems.