



Maintenance is key for irrigation system

Changing the oil, checking the spark plugs and ensuring the tires have plenty of air are just a few of the routine maintenance procedures people take when owning a car. For those with an irrigation system in the landscape, regular maintenance will help keep the system running in tip-top shape.

With July being Smart Irrigation Month, keep in mind that some tasks need to be done monthly, while others can be completed annually or simply periodically.

The sprinkler heads should be checked monthly. An irrigation system isn't useful if the sprinkler heads aren't putting the water where it is needed. Remove obstructions and adjust the heads to avoid watering sidewalks and other hardscapes. Make sure the sprinkler heads provide necessary clearance over growing plants.

Check the pressure of the system every month. If the pressure is too high, too much water will be applied too quickly and result in excess runoff or will be lost due to misting.

Take time each month to check for leaks in the system. A leaky pipe or sprinkler head can waste a lot of water. Look for leaks, broken or clogged sprinkler heads and other issues that can interfere with an efficient system.

Gardeners who live in colder climates will need to winterize the irrigation system each year. It's a good idea to bring in a professional irrigation specialist with the necessary equipment to flush out the pipes. Water left in the system can freeze and crack the pipes, valves and sprinklers, which can be a costly repair.

Periodically, hire a professional to audit the system and run uniformity tests to determine if zones are being watered evenly and appropriately. Irrigation audits can also be conducted by yourself, see [Oklahoma State University Extension](#)'s fact sheet HLA-6610 [Simple Irrigation Audit for Home Lawns in Oklahoma](#).

For those interested in upgrading their irrigation system, consider installing rain/freeze sensors. Most systems can be retrofitted, and these sensors will save money by turning off the system during a rain event or an unexpected freeze.

Smart controllers are another option for upgrades. Weather- or soil-moisture-based controllers evaluate weather or soil moisture conditions and automatically adjust the irrigation schedule to meet the specific needs of the landscape.

Check with the local water utilities offices for rebates on certain water-efficient products.