

# *Irrigation System Tune-Up Tips*

**Now is the time to get your irrigation system ready for an efficient watering season. A properly functioning, well-maintained system will keep your landscape healthy while making every drop count! Here are a few tips to be sure your system is ready to go:**



- Look for and repair leaks and broken spray heads.
- Remove plant material (moss, grass or foliage) that has grown over or is blocking spray heads.
- Adjust spray heads to avoid watering the street, driveways or sidewalks.
- Improve scheduling to increase irrigation efficiency:
  - Avoid watering when it rains or install a rain shutoff device to do it for you.
  - Water early in the day (before 9 a.m.) to reduce water lost to evaporation.
  - Adjust your watering schedule at least monthly to match weather conditions. Plants need much less water in May and September than in July and August.
  - Water according to plant needs. Lawns need only 1” of water per week (including rainfall) to stay green in summer, and half that much in May and September. Most shrubs and perennials require much less water than grass, especially in shady areas. Cut back or eliminate watering well-established trees and shrubs (2-5 years old), except in very dry years.
  - Water plant roots deeply but infrequently to build deeper, healthier roots. Dig into the soil after watering to see if moisture has penetrated to the roots. Use what you learn to guide future watering.
  - Reduce scheduling to eliminate water run-off. If runoff occurs soon after watering begins, you may need a controller that allows you to “cycle and soak”, that is, break one watering period into two or three events with time in between to allow the water enough time to penetrate the soil.
- Rebates up to \$450 are available** for the installation of new weather-based controllers, rain sensors and other hardware from Bellevue Utilities and Cascade Water Alliance. For more information visit [www.cascadewater.org](http://www.cascadewater.org) or call Bellevue Utilities at 425-452-4127.



# ***More Waterwise Yard Care Tips***

**Managing outdoor water use is an important gardening technique. A few wise choices now can help you save precious water resources and maintain a healthy lawn and garden this summer.**

**Build good soil.** Add organic matter into your soil to improve its moisture-holding ability. Materials that are composted – yard trimmings, manures, leaves – all provide nutrients, water and a healthy environment for plant roots.

**Choose low water use plants for immediate beauty and future water savings.** All plants need water until they are established, typically 1-3 years, but by choosing plants wisely and giving them a good start, you can create a beautiful garden that thrives with little effort and less water... even in the driest summers! Ask your local nursery staff for suggestions on low water use plants or visit the Waterwise Garden at Bellevue Botanical Garden.



**Group together plants with similar water needs.** Avoid mixing plants that need regular water with those that don't. Your plants will be healthier when they get just the water they need -- no more and no less.

**Mulch your plantings.** An organic layer of mulch placed on the surface of your soil holds moisture and reduces weed germination. Choose woody mulches for trees and shrubs and a composted material for annual and perennial plantings.

**Manage weeds.** Weeds compete with other plantings for soil moisture. Since you can never eliminate them, it is best to avoid creating conditions that favor weed growth. Think twice about using pesticides and avoid weed and feed products, which can run off your property. (Weed and feed type products have been found in Bellevue streams.) Concentrate on healthy gardening practices and remove existing weeds by hand-pulling or spot spraying.

**Prepare your lawn.** Soil compaction can prevent water from reaching lawns roots. Check for this conditions now and, if needed, aerate to improve the situation.

**Mow higher (1- 2”), mow regularly, and leave the clippings.** Leaving the clippings does not cause thatch build up, but it does make your lawn healthier. Soil organisms recycle the clippings into free fertilizer, and save you the work of bagging them. Raising your mower height now will help your lawn develop deeper roots this spring.

**Tune up your watering system.** Inspect irrigation systems and repair leaky, broken, or poorly adjusted sprinklers. Learn how to work your irrigation controller so watering adjustments can be made as needed. Don't forget to fix leaky hoses and faucets. Adding a shut-off to every hose can also eliminates water waste.

***Thanks for making every drop count!  
For more information, call Bellevue Utilities at 425-452-4127.***

