



# Landscape & Sprinkler Care Guide

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## PLANT CARE

Newly planted trees, shrubs and perennials need some TLC for the first few weeks after planting to lessen transplant shock. Here are a few guidelines to help you take care of your investment.

### **TREES:**

When watering trees, water very slowly for a long period of time. The root balls can be quite deep and the water needs to penetrate the root ball completely. For the first week you need to keep the root ball wet, so watering every other day is recommended. After the first week you want the root ball to dry out between waterings, so watering twice the second week should be sufficient. After the second week the irrigation system should be sufficient to keep the trees and root balls watered.

In exceptionally hot weather you should occasionally deep water your trees, being careful to not keep the root ball wet at all times. Trees are killed as often from over watering as under watering.

### **SHRUBS & PERENNIALS:**

Shrubs and perennials should be watered thoroughly after planting. The soils need to be saturated to a depth of about 8". After the plants are initially soaked the irrigation system should be sufficient to maintain the proper moisture content. If a plant looks wilted, check the soils before increasing irrigation as this could just be the results of shock from planting. Pull back the mulch and dig down with your finger several inches to see if the soils are too wet or too dry. Remember- a plant that is drowning in too much water will wilt just like a plant that is too dry.

### **SOD:**

Sod should be kept wet for the first two weeks after installation. At this point we are just trying to keep the sod alive. Normally we run the irrigation system two times per day during this period. After two weeks (or when the sod has rooted and you can no longer pull it up with a gentle tug) the irrigation will be adjusted down to a normal schedule by our service department. Reducing the water will start to dry out the grass so it will send down additional roots. This will vary with soil conditions.

All traffic across new sod should be kept to a minimum (for at least two if not three weeks) as it separates seams and disturbs the underlying grade, making the new lawn seem “lumpy”.

The first mowing can usually occur in the third week after installation, or when sod reaches a height of 3-3 ½” tall. Adjust mower to approximately 2 ½” and be certain the blades are sharp. Do not water the day prior to mowing; make sure the sod is not soggy but firm or the mower will create tracks or ruts. Repeat the mowing procedures approximately once per week during the growing season. Do not remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade per mowing.

Avoid fertilization of new sod for one month, then fertilize normally. Fertilize the lawn at approximately six (6) week intervals with a well-balanced (20-10-5) fertilizer at the recommended rate. It is best to fertilize in two directions at ½ rate to insure proper coverage and overlap. Remember- more frequent light applications give better color and health than less frequent heavy applications. Fertilizing before a rain or early snow is a great time to apply.

A pre-emergent used in spring will help keep weeds to a minimum. You may find that it is necessary to use a broadleaf herbicide to correct encroaching weeds. Be sure to use caution with broadleaf herbicides, as they will also kill the perennials and shrubs in your beds if they are contacted with overspray.

#### **GENERAL TIPS:**

Winter water is extremely important for the health of your plants and trees. Winter watering should take place approximately every three weeks when there are spells of warm, dry winter weather. You will need to deep water the trees and also water the plant beds and sod areas. Be especially sensitive to the needs of evergreen trees and shrubs, which continue to lose water through their needles and leaves in the winter. We realize that this is inconvenient when the irrigation system is deactivated; however, the resulting health and vigor of the plants are well worth the effort. Lifescapes Associates does offer a winter watering service at an hourly rate - please contact our service department for details if interested.

All plant materials are installed with a fertilizer tablet, which will slowly release over a period of one year. However, plants will benefit from supplemental fertilization. We recommend a liquid fertilizer such as Miracle Grow or Rapid Grow, which cannot “burn” the plants. With a liquid feeder, the plants will benefit from both foliage transfer and root transfer of the fertilizer. Chelated iron should be applied twice per season as this keeps the leaves from yellowing. Follow container directions when fertilizing or treating for insects. Remember- More is not always better.

After the first growing season, a good slow release fertilizer, such as Osmocote, should be applied in the spring after the danger of frost has passed. Discontinue all fertilization by September, as you want the plants to “harden off” before winter.

Insect problems should be corrected with insecticides when they are encountered. Weekly inspections should keep insects in check; however if insects are a problem, call for proper treatment. Chewing

insects (such as grasshoppers & slugs) can cause major damage quickly, so they must be taken care of as soon as possible. Weekly treatments may be necessary.

“Deadheading”, which is removal of old blooms, is a good practice for perennials. Many of the perennials will respond to deadheading by producing additional flowers. You want to perform the deadheading after the flower has past its’ peak but before the seeds have a chance to mature.

Pruning should be done conservatively. Try to prune the plants to look natural- avoid “shearing”. Light pruning can be performed at any time during the season but heavy pruning should be done when the plants are dormant. Prune lilacs after blooming as next years blooms start to set soon after this year’s blooms die. In general, prune or trim only as necessary. Remove any dead, diseased, or dying branches and make all cuts clean at a 45 degree angle, do not cut cleanly to the base of tree trunks, leave a small stub.

Your plant beds were installed with a protective layer of mulch. This mulch helps reduce water consumption and also helps reduce weeds. The mulch will not PREVENT weeds. The weeds will germinate in the mulch and begin to grow. If you visit your beds weekly you will find that the weeds will easily pull out of the mulch as they have not yet had time to get their roots in the soil. If you wait too long between weedings the weed may have chance to take root and will become more difficult to eliminate. Your mulch may need topdressing every year or two to keep a minimal depth of at least 2”.

All deciduous trees should be wrapped from the soil surface to the first branch around November 1. Wrapping helps prevent the smooth bark of new trees from getting sunburned in the winter. Secure the wrapping with masking tape or a stretch tie- do not use string. Deciduous trees should be wrapped for the first few years after planting until the tree grows enough for the bark to get rough. Remove wrapping in the spring, after April 1.

Remove tree stakes after the first full growing season has passed. We usually like to remove the posts around the first of May, when the high spring winds have subsided.

## **MONTHLY CHECKLIST**

### **JANUARY**

1. Prune dead wood from trees and shrubs (except maples, birches and walnuts).
2. Conduct winter watering.

### **FEBRUARY**

1. Spray trees with dormant oil.
2. Conduct winter watering.

### **MARCH**

1. Apply borer spray if you have a borer problem on ash trees.
2. Conduct winter watering.

### **APRIL**

1. Prune roses to live wood.
2. Begin lawn-mowing operations.
3. Apply crabgrass preventative on entire lawn (early April).
4. Apply herbicide for dandelions.
5. Fertilize lawn.
6. Remove tree wrap.
7. Inspect and activate sprinkler system.

### **MAY**

1. Install annuals (mid May).
2. Fertilize trees, shrubs and perennials.
3. Spray apples, crabs, pears, mountain ash and pyracantha to prevent fire blight.
4. Feed roses.
5. Re-mulch beds.
6. Inspect sprinkler system operation- adjust timing as needed.

### **JUNE**

1. Fertilize lawn.
2. Check all trees and shrubs for insect pests.
3. Feed roses.
4. Inspect sprinkler system operation- adjust timing as needed.

### **JULY**

1. Check lawn for fungi, if present treat with fungicide available at local garden center.
2. Fertilize lawn.

3. Prune shrubs after flowering.
4. Continue mowing operations.
5. Head back annuals & perennials.
6. Inspect sprinkler system operation- adjust timing as needed.

## **AUGUST**

1. Continue mowing operations.
2. Head back annuals & perennials.
3. Inspect sprinkler system operation- adjust timing as needed.

## **SEPTEMBER**

1. Fertilize lawn.
2. Continue mowing operations.
3. Head back annuals & perennials.
4. Inspect sprinkler system operation- adjust timing as needed.

## **OCTOBER**

1. Cut back perennials.
2. Plant fall bulbs for spring color.
3. Adjust staking of new trees.
4. Head back annuals.
5. Reduce watering time on sprinkler system in beginning of the month; probably blow out system at end of the month.

## **NOVEMBER**

1. Mulch roses and tender perennials.
2. Wrap trees.
3. Blow out sprinkler system if not done in October.
4. Remove annuals.

## **DECEMBER**

1. Conduct winter watering as necessary.

# SPRINKLER SYSTEM MANUAL

Congratulations! Now that you have a fully automatic sprinkler system, you don't have to worry about watering your yard again! Well, that's almost 100% true. The fact is, your sprinkler system functions mechanically just as your car does and will require some basic maintenance every now and then to ensure proper operation. Your system is guaranteed for one full year from product defects and/or installation problems. However, after that two-year period, Lifescape Associates Inc. will always be around to service your sprinkler should you have any problems. We have comprised the following "Things to Know" list for all Lifescape Associates Inc. sprinkler system owners, which will aid in troubleshooting any potential problems you may encounter.

## ***THINGS TO KNOW...***

### **SPRINKLER TAP**

The sprinkler tap is where your sprinkler system attaches to the main water supply. There are two types of taps available, inside taps and outside taps.

**Inside Taps** An inside tap is typically the easiest and most economical to install. It is usually located in the basement or crawl space of a home. It consists of a shut-off valve and bleeder screw, which will aid in draining your system in the winter. It is important that the bleeder screw contains a rubber gasket inside to provide a proper seal. The bleeder screw should only be tightened by hand.

**Outside Taps** An outside tap will be out in the yard between the home and where the main water comes in off of the street supply. The shut-off valve is called a "stop and waste" and is approximately 6' deep inside a sleeved pipe. Turning on and shutting off the system requires **only a ¼ turn** of the valve with a long 6 to 8 foot "key". A flashlight will help align the key onto the stop and waste valve properly. It is important to turn on or shut off the valve the complete ¼ turn to prevent leakage of water through the "waste" or drain hole in the valve. This drain will aid in draining your system for the winter.

### **BACKFLOW PREVENTION DEVICE**

The backflow prevention device is the large, usually exposed copper pipe and brass "bell" with various shut-off valves. This device is required by law through the Colorado Department of Health to be installed on all cross connections where a sprinkler system will come in contact with potable drinking water (your main water supply line). This valve will prevent any potential contaminants, such as pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers from being back-siphoned into your drinking water supply. If you should ever see water continually draining or pouring out of this valve, close both shut-off valves on the unit and contact Lifescape Associates Inc. for proper servicing.

Since this device is the only part of your sprinkler system which contains water and is out of the ground exposed to the elements it does present a need to be protected in the early spring or fall should temperatures drop below freezing at night. The best way to do this is to wrap all of the exposed parts, including the copper pipes, with fiberglass insulation and then covering everything with plastic (a large garbage bag works well) and taping with duct tape to ensure that it all stays in place.

In the fall, following winterization of the system, it is important to make sure that all of the handles and petcocks are cocked at 45 degrees and kept that way until spring. This will prevent any possible freeze damage to the ball valves.

## **SPRINKLER CLOCK**

The sprinkler clocks that we use are what we believe to be the best commercial grade clocks available to our clients; we have them in our own homes! Your Foreman that installed your system will show you how to operate the controller. Should you need further assistance, please refer to your owner's manual or feel free to contact Lifescape Associates Inc.

***It is important to replace the battery in the controller at the beginning of every season.*** The battery is backup so that your controller will not lose its program during any power failures that may occur. The clock needs to have a properly charged battery installed to be able to be programmed. Please note if your clock requires a rechargeable (NICAD) or regular battery.

Should you encounter any nearby lightening strikes, check your controller's panel following the storm. A flashing LED panel indicates that the clock has lost its program due to a surge through the ground. The clock will need to be re-programmed.

Remember- your clock always needs to be in the automatic or run mode, not manual, in order to run automatically.

## **ELECTRIC SOLENOID VALVES**

The valves, which are located inside the green valve boxes buried throughout the yard, are responsible for sending the water to each separate zone after receiving the signal from the controller. Should you notice one zone not watering, contact Lifescape Associates Inc. so we can check the electrical continuity to the valve. If a zone waters continually without shutting off, this is called a "stuck valve". Shut off the water to the whole system **outside at the Backflow Prevention Device** by closing one valve and call Lifescape Associates Inc. for service.

## **SPRINKLER HEADS**

The Rainbird spray heads and Hunter rotors that we use are the best available. That being said, sometimes sand has a way of creating problems for sprinkler heads by clogging nozzles and reducing the effectiveness of their spray. Should this happen, unscrewing the nozzle and cleaning out the orifice with a fine wire usually works. Remember to always make sure the plastic filter screen is in place in the neck of the head before reinstalling the nozzle.

If a sprinkler head does not return to its case and sticks in the "up" position, **unscrew the top portion of the head only** (leaving the case in the ground) and remove the internal assembly- remove any debris. Upon replacing the internal assembly into the case, make sure that any grooves that may be internal line back up with the appropriate guides on the case.

Each spray head has an adjustment screw on the top of the nozzle, which can give a “custom” spray by either opening or closing down the spray screw. It is important to know that **spray and rotor heads in sod areas should always reach at least head to head to provide proper coverage.**

## **PROGRAMMING TIPS**

A properly functioning sprinkler system is only as good as its design and the program it runs on. Some basic programming tips are as follows:

- Shrub and flowerbeds require less water than sod.
- Watering should be done between sunset and sunrise to avoid water losses due to evaporation (heat of the day) and wind.
- Program your sprinkler to start when household water use will be at a minimum, i.e.: showers, dish washing and clothes washing. This will enable the sprinkler system to operate efficiently using the maximum amount of water for which it was designed.
- Your sod and plants will require less water in the spring and fall than during the heat of the summer. Seasonally adjusting your watering amounts will conserve water and save you money on your water bill.
- Your sprinkler system was designed with Northern and Southern exposures taken into consideration. The South facing exposures will require more water than the North, this applies to sod as well as plant beds. Adjusting the times accordingly will also conserve water and save you money as well as maintaining healthier plant material.
- Write down your program that you like to use and keep on record with the controller.

Everyone at Lifescape Associates Inc. appreciates your business and we all hope you enjoy your new landscape. If we can be of any assistance to you, please feel free to contact us.

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## **AUTOMATIC IRRIGATION SYSTEM**

Your new underground irrigation system should provide you with many years of trouble-free operation providing these simple maintenance procedures are followed:

### **Spring Start-Up Procedures:**

1. Close all drain valves located at each grouping of control valves.
2. Close the petcocks on the vacuum breaker. This is the piece of equipment that appears above ground that resembles a bell.
3. Close the drain located in the pit where the waterline was “tapped”.
4. Open the supply valve very slowly. This valve is also located in the pit where the tap was made.
5. Open the ball valves on the vacuum breaker to energize the mainline. These should be opened slowly.
6. If your controller is equipped with a battery, replace it. Set the time, day and date. Program each stations time according to the averages listed in Item #3 under General Notes (following page).

7. Run through the entire system to assure proper working conditions and to check for leaks.

### **Weekly Maintenance:**

1. Inspect heads and nozzles for proper coverage and working conditions.
2. Clean any dirt nozzles or filter screens.
3. Inspect components for damage due to lawn maintenance procedures.

### **Monthly Maintenance:**

1. Perform all weekly procedures.
2. Adjust times on controller to compensate for different temperatures and precipitation each month.
3. Run through the controller to assure proper working condition.

### **Yearly Maintenance:**

1. Perform all monthly procedures.
2. Inspect all components (heads, valves, etc) to assure proper working condition.
3. Adjust heights of heads to accommodate fluctuations in turf height.
4. "Start-Up" and "Winterize" system (see detailed explanations).

### **Winterization Procedure:**

1. Close the main supply.
2. Connect the air compressor to the service tee located on the vacuum breaker.
3. Turn the controller to the station #1 and start compressor.
4. Force air through station #1 until the water has been blown out. Continue the process through stations #2, #3, etc. until all stations have been blown out completely.
5. Open all drain valves and petcocks on the vacuum breaker.
6. Turn off the controller but allow it to run so that lubricants stay on clock motors.
7. While your system can be drained without blowing it out, we recommend blowing it out with compressed air in order to remove all water and to relieve the stress that ice causes in our harsh climate.

### **General Notes:**

1. It is important to repair any malfunctioning equipment as soon as possible, especially during the hot mid-Summer months.
2. Check for spots that appear to be dry. The sooner these are corrected, the less damage there will be.
3. Spray heads apply more water than rotary heads in the same amount of time. Therefore, these stations will need to run for a shorter period of time. Average station times are as follows:
  - a. Drip zones: 45-60 minutes
  - b. Spray zones: 20 minutes
  - c. Rotary zones: 30-45 minutes

These times are only averages and will vary depending on the time of season, plant material type, wind and soil conditions.