

Eco-Tip for 3/18/18

Smart Irrigation Products: Time to Adjust the Automatic Sprinklers

by David Goldstein, Ventura County PWA, IWMD

During the last week of rain, did you see a neighbor's automatic sprinkler system running?

If adjusted correctly and shut off during wet weather, automatic sprinkler systems are water saving devices, preventing accidental over-watering. Saving water not only conserves a valuable local resource, water conservation also saves the energy of pumping water, reduces waste from excessive plant growth, and prevents run-off into storm drains. Using less water can save money too; 70 percent of a typical household's water use is outdoors,

Fortunately, there are solutions to prevent automatic sprinklers from watering during rainy weeks. Weather-based "smart controllers" are available for residential or commercial use from local landscape and irrigation companies. Simple controllers, costing less than \$300, use moisture sensors. More sophisticated devices, capable of adjusting to "June Gloom" in the morning and bright sunlight in the afternoon, and sensitive to the particular types of landscape needing water in each zone of your garden, cost over \$700. For a monthly fee, you can even get automatic sprinkler controllers linked to a satellite with weather data from a station near your home.

Some water providers subsidize customers' purchases of smart irrigation controllers. For example, the Casitas Municipal Water District is offering up to \$250 rebates for qualifying irrigation controllers. Water agency studies show smart irrigation controllers alone can reduce your water bill up to 40 percent, but "weather based" irrigation systems are just one of the tools people can use to reduce over irrigation.

Some water providers also offer free shower heads, faucet aerators, and replacement toilet flappers, along with dye to put in your tank so you can determine if you need a replacement flapper. Casitas even offers subsidies for turf removal and for low-water using commercial and residential washers and toilets.

With all this promotion of technologies to conserve water, let's not forget the most basic technological "fixes." Check for leaks, repair broken sprinkler heads, and manually re-set controllers after a power outage. After outages, many sprinkler systems default to factory settings, watering 10 minutes per day every day, even when it's raining.