

DRIP IRRIGATION



Benefits and Value

In order for plants to grow and flourish, they need the correct amount of water. Too much can be damaging and too little can cause plant stress and death. The most efficient irrigation system for a particular area will be one that delivers the right amount of water to the plant roots, while wasting the least amount of water due to environmental and systemic factors.

Due to the current state of the economy and growing importance for water conservation, landscape professionals (both big and small) have been forced to use expert scrutiny when designing irrigation systems and watering plans. As water restrictions become more prevalent nationwide, many landscape professionals, as well as homeowners, have found drip irrigation as a viable, water saving solution.



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Drip vs Sprinklers

Water loss due to environmental factors is a major concern for anyone that plans on utilizing an irrigation system. Although conventional sprinklers are widely used, they are often inclined to use large amounts of environmental water loss. Because sprinklers deliver water to vegetation through the air, large portions of the water is susceptible to elements such as wind, low humidity, heat, terrain angle, and physical obstructions, which may lead to uneven watering within the irrigation zone. Because of these varying environmental factors, conventional sprinklers are often prone to overwatering, under-watering, and water run-off.

Drip irrigation helps combat these environmental factors by delivering water directly to the base of the vegetation, significantly reducing environmental water loss. By installing a well-designed drip irrigation system, precision control can be remarkably improved for optimal growth. This will in turn conserve water-loss, reduce run-off, and lessen the occurrence of weeds and other unwanted vegetation. When installed and used correctly, drip irrigation has the potential to save up to 60% or more water over conventional sprinklers. Having an irrigation system installed by an IA Certified professional will increase the likelihood of maximizing water-loss (link to IA).



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Cost of Water

In recent years, water restrictions have become increasingly prevalent nationwide. As a result of widening water conservation efforts, numerous water districts are enforcing tight water restrictions to combat rampant drought conditions and water scarcity. In the most problematic states like California, water agencies are calling on businesses and homeowners to reduce outdoor water use by up to 60%. In order to effectively enforce these regulations and deter users from wasteful practices, many major cities across the nation have increased water rates. In areas of high water scarcity like Fresno, California, the price of water rose a whopping 50% from 2013 to 2014.

Utilizing drip irrigation is a smart and easy way to conserve water and save money. A properly installed drip irrigation system can deliver the precise amount of water needed in order to keep plants healthy and productive even in the most problematic conditions.



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Potential Disadvantages of Drip Irrigation

Although drip irrigation is often the most effective and economical choice, there are a few instances where they may not be the best choice, such as large turf areas with varying landscape. A conventional sprinkler system may also be a better fit if water is needed to break down surface spread granular fertilizers.

In certain cases, the disadvantages of a drip system can be:

- The soft poly tubing can be susceptible to damage from insects, rodents, and household pets.
- A filter is required to guard against potential clogging at the very small orifices of the drippers and micro sprinklers and should be cleaned regularly.
- In addition to a filter, the drip system should be flushed every few months or sooner.
- You cannot see a drip system working as you can a conventional sprinkler system, so close inspection is important to ensure everything is running correctly.
- Drip irrigation creates a smaller wetted area, so control is more critical to avoid stress for the plants.



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