Spring Irrigation Tune-up

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Now that spring is here and the majority of the rainy season is over, your plants will have an in- creased need for water. The following check list is geared for a drip irrigation system that is de- signed to deliver water frequently at low flow rates. Drip irrigation provides a more favorable air- water balance and a more even amount of soil moisture. The following steps can be used as a guide for a spring sprinkler tune-up.

Before you turn on your irrigation system follow these quick 10 steps to ensure successful growing season.

1. Makesurethatyouhaveadjustedtheirrigationcontrollertimertoreflectdaylightsavingstime.
2. Flush the main line to clear any accumulated dirt or sediment in the line.
3. Clean the filter. If you have ditch or pond water, you will have to clean the filter throughout the growing season. Ditch or pond water can be problematic in drip irrigation systems due to sediments in the water.
4. Turnoneachvalveandcheckforanyleaksinthemainirrigationlinesandrepairasnecessary.
5. Cap the system, pressurize and check all emitters to be sure they are operating.
6. Clean the emitters that are not performing satisfactorily. Take any faulty emitters and soak them in a soapy water solution and use forced air if necessary to clear particulate matter.
7. Replace broken or non-functional emitters. When replacing the emitter, take a look at the area that the emitter covers. Has the plant growth over the last year made it necessary to change the location of the emitter? Perhaps the type of emitter needs to be changed at this time to a micro- sprinkler to cover a larger area. Consider minor pruning of plants to maximize good irrigation.
8. Remember that grouping plants that have similar irrigation needs is the best plan for your garden irrigation design and it ensures the efficient use of water. Do any rearranging of plant material that can be done safely at this time of year for those plants that are out of place in your design.
9. Over-watering with drip systems is common. Check the soil moisture at the rooting depth of plants the day after initial watering. Adjust the irrigation time and delivery method accordingly.
10. Remember that plant water requirements will increase in peak summer heat over cool spring and fall temperatures so adjust run times accordingly. Make a note on the calendar to recheck in June and again in September.

Perform spot checks throughout the season to assess system performance. Regularly check soil moisture around plants. The failure of a drip system is often evident only when plant is failing! Now you are set for another successful year of garden irrigation.

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