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## 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 increased need for water. The following check list is geared for a drip irrigation system that is designed to deliver water infrequently 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 start using your irrigation system follow these quick 10 steps to ensure a successful growing season.

1. Make sure that you have adjusted the irrigation controller timer to reflect daylight savings time.
2. Flush the main distribution lines to clear any accumulated dirt or sediment in the line.
3. Clean the filter. If you have ditch, well, or pond water, you will have to clean the filter throughout the growing season. These water sources can be problematic in drip irrigation systems due to sediments in the water.
4. Turn on each valve (one at a time) and check for any leaks in the lines and repair as necessary.
5. Turn on each valve (one at a time) and check all emitters to be sure they are operating properly.
6. Clean the emitters that are not performing satisfactorily. Take any faulty emitters and soak them in a soapy water solution and rinse well. 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?
8. Remember that grouping plants that have similar irrigation needs is the best plan for your garden irrigation design because it ensures the efficient use of water.
9. Over or under watering with drip systems is common. Check the soil moisture at the rooting depth of plants the day after watering. Adjust the run time 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 your plants. The failure of a drip system is often evident only when a plant is failing!

These tips will help you have a successful year of garden irrigation.

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