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## Time for an Irrigation Tune Up

By Jim Trog, CIA, CIC



Automatic irrigation systems have become as commonplace as air conditioning on most valley homes. They provide a level of convenience while keeping our landscapes healthy and beautiful. Unfortunately, most homeowners tend to overwater their lawns or waste water due to lack of maintenance. Here are a few tips to keep your system running like new:

**Inspect your system for leaks** – Learn to identify signs of a leak while working in the yard. Water standing inside a valve box or wet areas around sprinkler heads are sure signs of a problem. Don't put them off. Small leaks can make for a costly water bill each month.

**Adjust the height of the sprinkler heads** – Lawns may be maintained at a height that blocks the spray pattern of the sprinkler. This may cause brown spots in the turf. Raise the sprinkler head using a riser extension so the pop up sprinkler clears the mowed height of the lawn. Be sure to allow some extra room for the turf to grow without blocking the spray.

**Clean the filters and nozzles** – Sprinklers contain filters that keep debris from entering the sprinkler's nozzle. If these filters become fouled, then the spray pattern will not allow optimal coverage. The filter is typically located under the nozzle on the sprinkler. Unscrew the nozzle, remove the filter screen and flush with water or replace if needed. Clogged nozzles will create gaps in the spray pattern which will lead to dead

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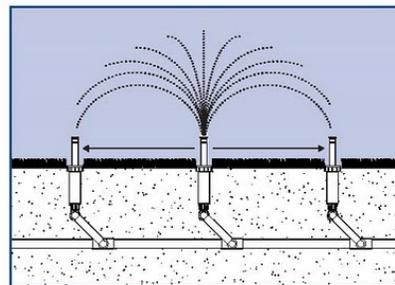
areas in the turf or "hotspots".

**Adjust the spray patterns** – Water that sprays on sidewalks, driveways, walls or into planter beds wastes water. Sprinklers can become misaligned if hit by the lawnmower or weed eater or even by the family pet. Turn the system on and adjust the spray patterns so they only hit the targeted area.

**Learn how to adjust the automatic irrigation controller** – Understanding how to adjust the run time and the frequency of irrigation based on current weather conditions is the most important factor in delivering the proper amount of water to your plant material. Seasonal adjustments are essential for good water management and plant health.

A good guide to calculating the best run time for your lawn can be found at

<http://ag.arizona.edu/azmet/phx/>



*Sprinklers tops should be level with soil and spray from one should reach adjacent sprinklers to achieve proper coverage.*

*Clogged nozzles will create gaps in the spray pattern which will lead to "Hotspots" in the turf.*



## Weed Control, Turf Weeds

The tremendous rainfall the Valley has seen over the past few weeks is a welcomed change from the limited amount received in 2009. The higher than normal rainfall can cause some problems in the landscape including explosive weed growth. If you did not overseed your turf for the winter then the new weed growth should stand out but what to do? Mowing the new weeds down weekly will help to control growth but will not make the problem go away. Using a selective herbicide specifically for lawn weeds is the best control

method. Weed killer for lawn products are available at your local home improvement center. Remember to always follow the label instructions and have some patients. Most selective weed killers may take 7 – 10 days before you see results this time of the year. Plus, you will probably have to apply a second application as there will probably be a few remaining weeds. There are also fertilizers available that contain weed killer. These products are not as affective for weeds and may tend to burn the grass. Again, make sure that you follow the label instructions.

## Technology is Growing Tree Inventories to Greater Heights



By Gary McCunn, Certified Arborist WE-7255A

We have taken tree inventories to a whole new level at Four Peaks Landscape. We don't just go out and count your trees and hope we don't miss any. We use **ArborPro Management Software** which has developed a comprehensive inventory program to assist us in the efficient management of your trees. The program utilizes the latest in **GIS (Geographic Information System)** technology to provide the user with an immediate visual representation of any field asset.

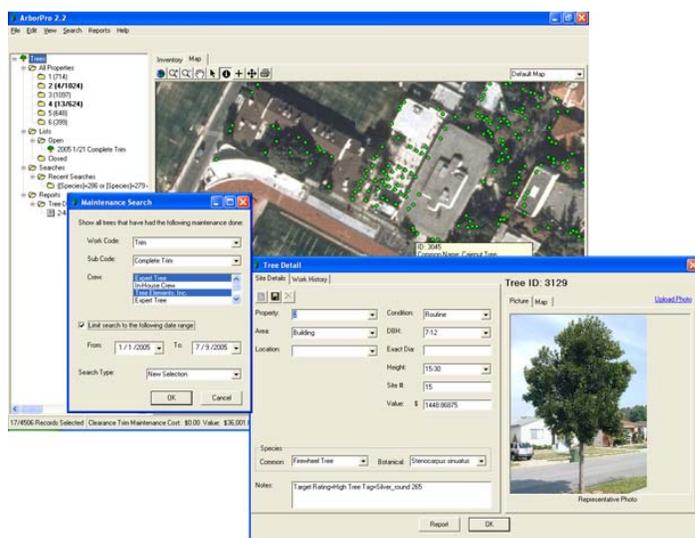
**Time is the most valuable resource** for any professional. ArborPro has optimized the time we have to spend on tree management through the rapid interface of mapped trees to pertinent information. The mapping feature is unique and will eliminate the need for site visits and complex data entry. All trees will be inventoried to client specifications, including size, type, condition, and estimated maintenance cost. Areas or sites can be quickly highlighted on a map, the maintenance cost will automatically be calculated, work lists issued and tasks completed.

If this is something that you think would be helpful to you and your board for better management of your trees, give us a call. We do not charge for this

service for our current clients.

If you're not currently a client of ours it is still a relatively inexpensive way to keep track of your trees. It also provides you with a tool to use for competitive bidding. If a tree trimming project is awarded to us based on the tree inventory that we charged you for we will credit back the amount charged for the inventory towards tree trimming cost.

For Questions or Further information please contact Gary at (602) 819-8922 or [gmcunn@fourpeakslandscape.com](mailto:gmcunn@fourpeakslandscape.com)

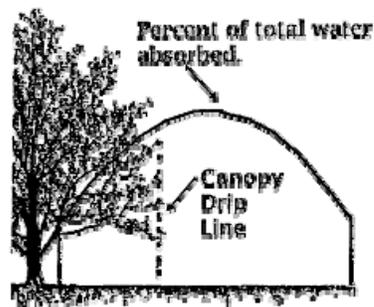


These are examples of just a few of the components that this system offers which helps us to better manage your tree inventory.

## GET THOSE EMITTERS AWAY FROM THE TRUNK

One of the best practices that can be completed for the health of your trees is to move the drip emitters away from the trunk of the tree. Usually when new trees are installed, the drip emitters are placed close to the tree trunk since that is where the bulk of the roots were located from the nursery container. As the tree matures the roots need to be forced out to help support the canopy and create a stable base. Moving the emitters away from the trunk and out to the edge of the root drip line will help accomplish this.

Emitters and the distribution tubing connecting them can be pulled back out of the ground and buried to their new locations around the tree to provide even



*Relocating emitters out to the canopy drip line will help force root growth away from the trunk of the tree.*

water. Some additional distribution tubing may need to be added.

Moving the emitters annually is an important part to promoting a healthy stable tree. This practice should go hand in hand with proper watering and canopy thinning.



## MONTHLY LANDSCAPE CHECKLIST

### Plant Renovation List (Common Type Plants)

- √ Bursage
- √ Desert Milkweed
- √ Butterfly Bush
- √ Baccharis Centennial
- √ Bougainvillea
- √ Black Dalea
- √ Trailing Indigo Bush
- √ Lantana
- √ All Sage Species if not renovated in January (Texas Ranger, Green Cloud, Rio Bravo, Silver Cloud, etc.)
- √ Heavenly Bamboo
- √ Evening Primrose
- √ Purple Fountain Grass
- √ Plumbago
- √ Pyrocantha
- √ Lady Banks Rose
- √ Chaparral Sage
- √ Purple Sage
- √ Yellow Bells
- √ Orange Jubilee
- √ Verbena

General Irrigation Setting (Actual times will vary depending on the precipitation rate of your system)

- √ Rye Grass Turf irrigated using typical pop-up sprinklers: 6 – 9 minutes twice per week.
- √ Dormant Bermuda Turf: Water once every few weeks to one time a month for a few minutes just to keep some moisture in the soil for the stolons.
- √ Drip irrigation for Plants: 10 – 14 minutes one time per week.
- √ Drip irrigation for Trees: 12 – 22 minutes one time per week.

Please remember that these are general recommendations and depending on your system you may need to adjust watering times up or down. Also, if we do receive rain then irrigation can be suspended until the soil dries. Based on the amount of rain received in the past few weeks irrigation could remain off for most of the month, especially if any additional rainfall is received.