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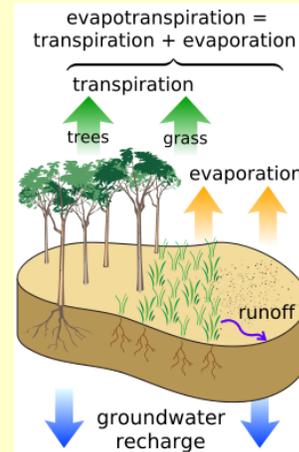
July - Smart Irrigation Month

By Jim Trog, CIA, CIC



The EPA's Water Sense Program dedicates July of each year officially as Smart Irrigation Month. Historically the highest water use month of the year, it is a good time to take a close look at how you use water around your home. Local statistics indicate on average approximately 70% of all water used by a single residence is used outside the home. This is a great time to evaluate your irrigation system and see if you can save some water and a few dollars this summer.

Evapotranspiration – The goal of supplemental irrigation is to provide just enough water as your plant material requires. The challenge is knowing just how much water that really is. Agricultural operations for years have used a reference called Evapotranspiration (ET). This is a measurement of how much water is lost by your plants or lawn through transpiration and from the soil through evaporation over a given period of time. If you have ever noticed the “lawn watering guide” published in the local newspaper, they are using this ET reference to indicate how much water is needed by your lawn if you haven't watered over the last few days. You can use this information if you know how much water your sprinklers apply over a short period of time. Using same sized containers (cups, cat food cans, Tupperware containers...); lay them out in a grid pattern in your lawn. Run the sprinklers for ten minutes and then measure and record how much water is in each container. Add the numbers together and divide by the number of containers used and you will get the average collected in each container. You now know your sprinkler's application rate and can use it along with the watering guide to calculate how long to run your sprinklers to replace just the water lost through ET.



Smart Irrigation Equipment – Many advancements have been made in irrigation equipment over the last few years. From the smallest drip emitter to sprinkler nozzles to irrigation controllers, manufacturers have strived to provide components to make irrigation more efficient. Consider upgrading to the new technology when it comes time to replace old-worn equipment. New “smart controllers” can be programmed with information about your irrigation system and then utilize ET data to automatically adjust irrigation programming based on current weather trends. Moisture sensors have can be added on to many existing controllers and use the level of moisture, real time, to tell your system to water or not. Almost “set it and forget it!”

Tips – Reduce run off and puddling by using a cycle and soak method of irrigating. This can be done easily by shortening the overall length of the run cycle and Adding multiple start times. As an example, if your sprinklers need to run for 20 minutes, it may be better to run 4 separate cycles of 5 minutes instead of applying 20 minutes at one time.

More information can be found at www.epa.gov/watersense, your local water conservation office or at www.wateruseitwisely.com.

Monsoon Storms and Trees!

By Fran Morahan III, Certified Arborist WE-7255A



Monsoon season starts in mid June and ends in the last week of September. Monsoon season in Arizona brings high winds with gusts up to 100mph, downbursts, dust storms, high humidity, and flooding. The effects of this extreme weather can be wide ranging from debris strewn around to damage to property.

–Preventive steps to minimize damage to trees

For trees the damage can be anything from broken branches to leaning or uprooted and downed trees. Dense canopies on trees prevent winds from passing through the tree. Rains cause the soil to be oversaturated causing the roots to have less hold. The results of just these two things can cause broken branches, make a tree lean, or uprooting the tree. Thinning out and balancing the canopy, allowing air to pass through the canopy with less resistance, removing crossing and rubbing branches, removing dead, decaying or damaged branches, removing weak attachments and narrow crotches are things that can be done to minimize the damage caused by storms to trees. Irrigating the tree properly and shutting off the irrigation when it rains is also important. Moving drip emitters away from the trunk on mature trees and placing them towards the outer edge of the canopy where the drip line is plugging drip emitters if there are other sources of water for the tree such as shrubs or turf will help the roots to spread to help anchor the tree.

–After the damage is done

If a tree is damaged during a storm cut back broken or damaged branches to a viable lateral branch or the trunk. Leaving stubs will cause a new flush of growth with weak attachments. If a small tree is leaning or down it might be salvageable if the root crown is not damaged. Larger trees that are leaning or down might have to be removed due to their size, there is also the potential that the root crown is damaged. Trees that are uprooted will have to be removed since the roots cannot be put back in the ground.



Leaning Mesquite after a storm



Damage to Root Collar



Damage to Acacia Salicina

General Landscape Care for July

Summer in Arizona, with high temperatures and monsoon storms... a typical forecast for July. Time to make sure your properties' waterways & drainages are clear of debris, ready for potential heavy rains. Identify any potential issues and rectify, or propose repairs prior to the rains. Trees are susceptible to winds and heavy rains, if not maintained properly. Check tree stakes and wiring, avoid girdling around trunks and branches, crown thin and shape as needed, to prevent tree loss or damage. Make sure emergency contact information and emergency storm clean up procedures are in place, prior to storm events.

July is a perfect time to prune fan palms, prior to their seed dispersal. Prune & shape select plants as needed, however over pruned, heat sensitive plants may not recover. Irrigation during July should be done in the early evening hours through the early morning hours. This will allow more water penetration into the soil, getting to the roots prior to evaporation. Multiple start times may be required, to achieve the necessary deep soaking and avoid excessive water run off / loss. However, know the capabilities and limitations of your irrigation systems. Some systems may not have the capability for multiple start times. Don't forget to fertilize your annuals, prior to jumping in the pool.



MONTHLY LANDSCAPE CHECKLIST

Plant Renovation List (Common Type Plants)

- √ Bougainvillea – If necessary to help control growth
- √ Bat-Faced Cuphea
- √ Creosote
- √ Purple Sage

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

- √ Bermuda Grass Turf irrigated using typical pop-up sprinklers: 12 – 15 minutes three times per week.
- √ Drip irrigation for Plants: 20 – 30 minutes two times per week. These times are for ornamental type plants. Native or xeriscape plants will require less.

- √ Drip irrigation for Trees: 40 – 50 minutes one time per week. These times are for ornamental type trees. Native or xeriscape trees will require less.

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.

Turf Fertilization for the Bermuda Grass should be completed once every six to eight weeks on average using fertilizer containing at least 16–20% Nitrogen. Apply following the label and make sure to water in for a few minutes after application.