



City of Grand Junction
Clifton Water District
CSU Cooperative Extension
Town of Palisade
Ute Water Conservancy District

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Drip irrigation offers many benefits, easy to use

By CURTIS SWIFT

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Using drip irrigation to water trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetable gardens can conserve water, reduce the need to control weeds and improve the health of your landscape plants. As with all irrigation systems, the system needs to be designed, installed and operated properly. These systems need to be updated as your landscape grows.

Drip irrigation, also known as “trickle” or “micro-irrigation,” uses drip tape, drip tubing and various emitters that drip, spit, bubble and spray small amounts of water to the root zone of the plant. In Delta and Montrose counties, drip irrigation is being used in onion fields and has been shown to increase yields while reducing water and labor requirements.

Drip irrigation delivers water slowly above, on or below the soil surface. This minimizes water loss due to runoff, wind and evaporation. During windy periods drip irrigation is much more effective than rotary or pop-up sprinkler systems.

Drip systems are easily expanded when additional plants are added. One emitter may be adequate for small plants, but trees and shrubs may need three to five emitters depending on the size of the plant. As roots extend into new soils, adding new emitters to take care of new roots is an easy task. Emitters can be exchanged or removed and emitter lines eliminated or repositioned. When emitters are no longer needed they can be plugged.

Drip systems and their emitters are often installed under mulch and sometimes under landscape fabric. The emitters need to be visible so you know when they are not applying water. The system should be run during the day every few weeks to ensure the system works properly.

Two of the new irrigation zones at The Arboretum at The Gardens at the Mesa County Fairgrounds will feature micro-irrigation. Some micro-irrigation nozzles are designed to be used to retrofit existing pop-up spray irrigation systems. This permits installation of micro-irrigation without the installation of a new delivery system. This is extremely helpful when converting lawns to xeriscape.

Drip irrigation can also be used to irrigate turf. These underground irrigation systems use specially designed tubing placed under the grass. The depth and closeness of the tubing and the spacing between the emitters in the tubing is critical and must take into account the type of soil where the system is installed. If you log on to the CSU Extension Web site at <http://WesternSlopeGardening.org> you can learn more about drip systems and read updates on subsoil turf irrigation systems, or call 244-1836 if you would like more information.

We live in a semiarid climate where droughts will always be a part of our environment. Water for our future means conserving now. The Drought Response Information Project (DRIP) is a collaboration between the valley's domestic water utilities and CSU Cooperative Extension to provide information and educate the public about drought and the importance of water conservation.