

Now's the time to check your sprinkler system

By CURTIS SWIFT

Special to the Sentinel

Spring is an excellent time to check out your sprinkler system to ensure it is working properly and not wasting water. Now is the time to inspect your irrigation system – so here are a few items to put at the top of your list of things to do.

● Not sure where to start? Give Ardith Blessinger a call at 683-4365. She conducts irrigation audits for Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Service. She will locate your problems, check the pressure of each zone and provide you a list of what needs to be fixed. Correcting the problems noted during her audit typically reduces your water usage by 40 percent. This service is priced reasonably at \$75 for each half-acre of lawn.

● Sprinkler heads that are too deep or not level with the slope should be lifted and reset. Heads that are broken or leaking should be replaced. Once this is accomplished, check to make sure the nozzle is applying water properly. You need to have head-to-head coverage to properly water the lawn.

● Make sure the pressure in your system is appropriate. If water is coming out of the sprinkler nozzle as a mist instead of as distinct droplets, the pressure is too high. This is easily corrected by installing a pressure regulator at the valve. Turn off the water to the system, unscrew the solenoid (the unit on the top of the valve with two wires), set the pressure regulator to the proper pressure and screw it into the valve. Reinstall the solenoid. This maintenance tip will help the water actually reach the plants you are trying to irrigate, instead of having the mist evaporate into the air and never reach the ground.

● Want to save water and reduce energy costs of running your irrigation pump? Install a Smart Controller. These units water your lawns and gardens based on local weather conditions. Most people experience a 55 percent reduction in water after installing one of these units. A paging system is now in place in Mesa County for the RainBird ET Manager Smart Controller. If you want to learn more about this and other Smart Controllers, check out the web page at:

WesternSlopeGardening.org/Smart_Controllers.html, or give Dr. Curtis Swift a call at 244-1840.

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.