

“Smart” irrigation uses technology to save water  
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Would you like to reduce the amount of water you use on your lawn and flowerbeds? How about saving money on your electricity bill by running your irrigation pump less? Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Service and the City of Grand Junction are doing both of these things with new technology that manages irrigation better. Proper irrigation management includes applying water only when it is needed based on evapotranspiration (ET). Basically, when the weather is hot and dry, plants need more water than when the weather is cold and wet. “Smart” irrigation controllers, such as the Hunter ET, ET Manager and the Smartline WeatherMatic systems are reported to reduce water use in landscaping by at least 55 percent. The system does this by receiving data from one of four weather stations strategically located in the Grand Valley and automatically adjusting the amount of water applied to landscaping.

These systems apply the required amount of water over time, which allows water to soak in to the soil before more water is applied. This technique is not only best for plants, it helps prevent the degradation of asphalt, curbing and sidewalks by reducing the amount of water running into the street. Using local weather data, the technology updates irrigation controllers and fine-tunes the amount of water applied over the course of the watering season.

For many Grand Valley residents, using irrigation controllers results in lower water and electricity bills. Because CSU Extension Service is managing the weather sites which distribute data to the irrigation controllers, you don't have to have your own on-site weather station. This small unit connects to your existing controller and receives local weather data on an hourly basis using paging technology.

The city of Grand Junction is on the cutting edge of this technology with its pilot retrofit project and has sponsored irrigation system upgrades at several businesses along North Avenue, including Good Times Burgers and Mesa Medical Supply. One residential irrigation system has also been upgraded through this project.

Each ET Manager and rain gauge system is available through CSU Extension for \$475. It typically takes no more than one hour to install and program the ET Manager and your irrigation clock. Homeowners can install this system, or CSU has trained technicians who can install the system for a fee.

To learn more about this technology, check out <http://WesternSlopeTurf.org> or call CSU Extension Service at 244-1834 or 244-1836.

*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.*