

Proper irrigation can help prevent gutter water

By TERRY FRANKLIN

Special to the Sentinel

It seems no matter where you drive around town, you see water running down the gutters. We all know it's not a result of the small amounts of rain we have received lately. Most likely, the water running down gutters usually is a result of over watering of landscaping. According to Ardith Blessinger, irrigation audit specialist with Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Service, there are a few easy tips to prevent all this wasted water from running down the gutter. Blessinger has conducted irrigation audits throughout the valley for many years and is working on some pilot projects for the City of Grand Junction to see how it can alleviate this problem.

The first obvious tip is to adjust sprinklers so they do not water sidewalks or driveways. No matter how much you water concrete and asphalt, they will not grow.

Another tip is to make sure you apply the correct amount of water for the soil type you are watering. Without getting into all the scientific discussions, it might help you to know that it's often the amount of time you spend watering an area that counts. For example, if you water each zone for 15 minutes every third day and water runs down the gutter, try watering each zone for seven minutes. Then repeat the watering schedule. A rest period between watering cycles allows the water to soak into the ground and prevents excess runoff.

Something you might not have thought about is the anatomy of your sprinkler heads. The correct-sized nozzle can make a big difference. The sprinkler nozzle for a full-circle head needs to be larger than one you would use for a one-quarter or one-half circle head. This is because the smaller-sized circle heads have to must apply more water than the full-circle impact nozzles to get the job done.

One more good idea is to make sure your pop-up sprinkler heads have enough clearance when they spray the water and are not creating a frog-eye effect. This happens when the sprinklers spray the water and hit the grass directly, smashing it in front of the sprinkler heads. This prevents the sprinkler from providing proper coverage and your lawn will not be watered evenly. Simply either keep the grass shorter or install a taller pop-up sprinkler that will easily clear the grass.

Let's all remember to water smarter and use our precious resources efficiently and wisely.

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.