

Monitoring irrigation saves water, prevents other problems

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Many homeowners turn on the sprinklers and don't really think about how much water is being sprayed on which areas, or have their irrigation systems on a timer and don't monitor how their systems are working. But paying attention to how efficiently your sprinkler system works can save water and help you prevent other problems, too.

Lawn irrigation systems should be inspected at least once a month. This is to make sure that sprinkler heads are working properly and water is applied uniformly over the entire lawn. Sprinkler heads that spray water in the wrong direction or are set too low in the grass need to be fixed. Watch out for plugged or broken sprinklers. Broken irrigation lines and incorrect programming of the irrigation controller can also cause problems.

Correcting problems with your irrigation systems should be a no-brainer. When lawns and fields are over-irrigated, pesticides, nutrients, salts, and other contaminants flush into our river system. These pollutants create problems for downstream users of the river, as well as plants and animals.

Over-irrigated lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers and other plants have more disease and insect problems than plants that are properly irrigated. Root rots are more common in over-irrigated yards, gardens and fields.

Mosquito breeding grounds also result from excessive irrigation, because standing water provides habitat for their larvae. You can even have problems with your house if you don't properly manage irrigation. Flooded crawl spaces and basements are common in parts of the Grand Valley where over-irrigation is common. This can lead to mold growing in your house, which can cause health problems.

Have your irrigation system checked for problems and make the needed corrections. Your health, the health of your plants and the health of the environment depends in part on the efficiency of your irrigation system. Information on how to identify and correct irrigation system problems can be found at www.westernslopeturf.org. If you do not have Internet access, contact the CSU Master Gardener desk at 244-1836 and ask them to send you a copy of the publication, "Identifying and Correcting Irrigation System Problems."

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.