

Automatic Sprinkler Systems

Automatic sprinkler systems commonly waste half of the water they apply. A well-maintained sprinkler system will save water and help keep your landscape healthy.

You may be able to fix some of the following problems yourself. Or hire a [certified irrigation professional](#) (pdf). We recommend an annual professional inspection and tune-up to prevent bigger, costly problems down the road.

Check your sprinkler system for these common problems:

- **Watering the sidewalk, driveway or other non-landscaped areas**
Overspray can sometimes be reduced by realigning sprinkler heads or turning down the flow control at the valve. In other cases, sprinkler heads may need to be moved or changed. For a narrow planting bed, consider switching to drip irrigation.
- **Water running off landscaped areas**
Runoff often occurs because the sprinkler system applies water faster than the soil can absorb it. Try breaking the watering time into two or more “cycles” with 30 minutes in between to let the water soak in. For more information on how to program common controller models, visit the [Irrigation Water Management Society](#).
- **Watering in the rain**
[Receive a \\$75 rebate](#) for installing a rain sensor to automatically pause your sprinkler system when it rains.
- **Brown spots in the grass**
Usually a sign that the water spray is not reaching an area. Sprinkler heads may need to be moved or added to provide more even watering. We do not recommend simply increasing the length of time you water because this will result in overwatering other areas.
- **Wet or muddy spots, grass that is greener than the rest**
May indicate a leak. Underground leaks can be difficult to identify and you may need to hire an irrigation specialist to locate and repair the leak.
- **Misting**
Small water droplets in the air indicate too much pressure. Turn down the flow control at the valve or have a professional install pressure-regulating valves or heads.
- **Heads that seep water at end of a watering cycle**
If you have a sloped yard, low-elevation sprinkler heads may drain the water that is in the pipe (this is called “low head drainage”). Have a professional install heads with “check valves” to stop the water from leaking out.
- **Watering established trees or shrubs**
Most trees and many shrubs do not need supplemental watering once they are established (3–4 years). Sprinkler heads that are no longer needed should be capped off.