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Seasonal Irrigation

One of the biggest variables to consider when planning your irrigation and planting schedule is the weather! Seasonal plants require a particular planting season in order to grow, ripen, or bloom, in addition to the correct amount of water. Here are the best planting strategies, month by month, so you can grow year round!

What We Will Cover

- Monthly Planting Strategies
- Winterizing Your Irrigation System
- Irrigation System Parts

Seasonal Irrigation

January

Plant	Plant trees and shrubs in containers.
	Plant annual flowers this month. Good picks include marigolds, sweet peas, impatiens, petunias, and snapdragons.
Plan	Plan now for your spring garden design changes or renovations before the season starts.
	Choose some perennials to start now from seed. Delphinium, Shasta, daisy, carnation and digitalis are good choices.
	Prepare garden soil for spring planting and plant seeds of beets, carrots, mustard, lettuce, green onions, peas, potatoes, radishes and spinach.
Garden Essentials	Remove vigorous winter weeds, prune trees and shrubs; remove diseased or storm-damaged wood. Lightly water and fertilize indoor plants as needed.
	Remove snow from evergreen hedges so it will not break branches and leave plants unattractive, removal can be done lightly using a broom or soft brush.
	Prune fruit trees in January and up to the middle of February, before the buds open and rains begin, after pruning apply dormant oil spray for over wintering scale, mealy bugs, white-flies, and mites.
Transplant	Transplant artichokes, broccoli, asparagus, cabbage, cauliflower and lettuce.
	Transplant bulbs or bare-root fruit and nut trees.

February

Plant	<p>There is still time to plant trees and shrubs, and lay lawns if conditions are right.</p>
	<p>Bare root or potted plants can be planted now. Fruit trees, grapes and roses will arrive in local garden centers during February.</p>
Plan	<p>Cold tolerant vegetable seeds, such as cabbage and lettuce, can be started indoors for earlier harvest, plant seeds four to six weeks before they are to be transplanted outside</p>
	<p>Prepare garden soil for spring planting and plant seeds of beets, carrots, mustard, lettuce, green onions, peas, potatoes, radishes and spinach</p>
Garden Essentials	<p>Plants don't need as much water through the winter months; many are even dormant. Turn on your drip system or sprinkler system as needed via the manual program or the manual lever on each valve; it can save you money on the water bill.</p>
	<p>Grass continues to use nutrients through the winter, especially during a mild winter. Lawns may need another application of a fall or winter fertilizer, especially if they develop a yellow color.</p>
	<p>Grapes, fruit trees and roses can still be pruned, remove old brittle canes, leave young canes with flower buds attached, when pruning trees, prune out dead and diseased branches, cut as close as possible to where the branch meets the trunk.</p>



March

Plant	It is time to start planting warm season vegetables such as eggplant, tomatoes, peppers, sweet corn, cucumber and melon.
	Purchase and plant bare root nursery stock while it is dormant.
Plan	East coast: Start seeds of cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, petunia, celosia and periwinkle indoors.
	Protect your plants, use your net for frost protection on early blooms on fruit trees.
Garden Essentials	It is time to start testing your irrigation system for spring, make sure that the filter is clean and all drippers and micro sprinklers are working correctly.
	Finish all pruning and planting of fruit trees.
	If you use your drip or sprinkler system now, turn it on as needed via the manual program or the manual lever on each valve; it can save you some money.



April

Plant	Asparagus and rhubarb roots should be planted as soon as the ground can be worked.
Plan	During weeks 1 and 2 you can start seeding tomatoes, peppers and eggplants indoors.
	Delay planting if the garden soil is too wet, when a ball of soil crumbles easily after being squeezed together in your hand, it is dry enough to be safely worked.
Garden Essentials	Heavy pruning of trees should be completed before growth occurs, trees should not be pruned while the new leaves are growing.
	Fertilize the garden as the soil is being prepared for planting, unless directed otherwise by a soil test, 1 to 2 pounds of 12-12-12 or an equivalent fertilizer per 100 square feet is usually sufficient.



May

Plant	Plant summer-blooming shrubs and vines.
	Plant lettuce, onions, spinach, beets, chard, carrots, parsnips, radishes, turnips, shallots, chives and parsley mid-month.
	Toward the latter part of the month it is safe to plant sweet corn, check the maturity dates of the sweet corn for early, mid-season and late crops.
Plan	In cooler areas start squash, cucumbers, melons and okra indoors, transplant to the garden when all danger of frost is past.
Garden Essentials	Water newly planted items, it doesn't take much for new transplants to dry out and die before they have a chance to become established.
	Watering roses with soaker hoses or drip irrigation will reduce the spread of black spot disease, control weeds that compete for water.
	Install or repair drip irrigation systems; check irrigation systems to make sure they are working properly.
Transplant	When the soil warms to 60 degrees F, transplant tomatoes and peppers outdoors and be prepared to protect the tender transplants from frost with a plastic cover.



June/July

Plant	You can still plant some vegetables, these include sweet potato transplants, southern peas, cherry tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, peanuts, eggplants, watermelons and pumpkins, also, you can plant pepper and tomato seeds for the fall.
Plan	Begin to order fall planted bulbs from your mail order sources for the best selections that these sources offer.
Garden Essentials	Watch for aphids and other insects, spray when insects start causing damage.
	Apply a thick layer of straw, leaves, or mulch to control weeds and retain moisture.
	The best time to water is early in the morning; try not to water in the evenings or late in the afternoon as this promotes foliar diseases because leaves stay wet all night.
	A good rule of thumb for watering both vegetable and flower gardens is to provide one inch of water a week if the rain doesn't do so, it's better to soak the soil around plants heavily every few days using a drip irrigation system to encourage deep rooting.
	Continue feedings in early summer, use your fertilizer injector to inject soluble fertilizer directly thru your drip system, look for yellow, brown, or distorted growth on new leaves for signs to start feeding.



August

Harvest	Harvest potatoes, sweet corn, garlic, onions, beans, cucumbers and tomatoes.
Plan	With many trees and shrubs starting to set up for fruits and flower buds for next season. A lack of water now will reduce next season's crop of fruit or flowers. Make sure to use drip irrigation with mulch to conserve moisture and keep the soil temperature cooler during the hot days of August. Make sure that the drip system covers a minimum of 70% of the root zone at any time.
	Don't let your vegetables grow too large! This uses lots of water and energy, and can result in a shortened harvest season.
	Begin taking cuttings for new plants. Review with your garden club for details.
Garden Essentials	Hotter days and nights have now arrived. Review your watering schedule and make adjustments if necessary. If your controller has a feature that includes a budget, just use this program and increase the irrigation period for August by 10% to 20% by changing the budget from 100% to 110% or 120%.
	Go to your garden and cut some of the flowers and fill your house with scent and color. Not only does this provide decoration but it will also help to keep the buds coming and ensure you have more blooms.
	Cut back herbs that are starting to flower. If they go to seed they will not produce any more leafy growth.
	Finish pruning and prepare beds for the new season's (spring) vegetables.
	Keep the soil moist, but not too much. With the continuing hot weather, don't be tempted to get hoses out and spray everything including the ground. Surface watering only encourages plant roots to come to the surface. This will make them more vulnerable to drying out.
	Vegetable gardens, most flowering plants, and the lawn all need a moist soil week to keep them green and looking nice. Be sure to keep your drip irrigation system on, and water deeply each time.
	When possible, turn your drip system on in the morning or early afternoon so the soil has a chance to warm up before the cooler evening hours. The soil should be moist at least 4 or 5 inches deep to insure that the drip irrigation you use is reaching the root zone of the plants. If your garden is planted with drought resistant plants, you won't have to water as often, but the principal of deep watering still applies.

September

Plant	Plant winter herbs such as parsley, oregano and cilantro, use rich, organic soil and raise the beds using quality potting soils with lots of organic matter.
	Start planting spring bulbs, different bulbs have different bloom times, so plant your gardens accordingly, most planting can wait until October.
Plan	Cooler days and nights will be arriving shortly; review your watering schedule and start making adjustments if necessary.
	The best time to water is early in the morning.
Transplant	Now is the second best time to transplant trees, wait until the leaves drop and trees are dormant, loosely tie branches to prevent damage, be sure to include sufficient soil around the roots to support them.



October

Plant	Plant garlic, spinach, lettuce, broccoli, and continue planting spring-flowering bulbs, different bulbs have different bloom times, so plant your gardens accordingly, most planting can wait until the end of October.
Plan	Fall is a great time to prepare your vegetable garden for next spring, add manure to the soil, and cover with weed mat or soil.
	With cool nights, rainfall, and morning dew, this is a great time to supply the lawn with the nutrients it needs to recover from and repair summer damage, an early fall feeding is one of the most important of the year.
	Consider using a drip system to water your gardens.
Garden Essentials	Remove any excessive growth on vines and selectively choose only the wiry growth, make sure not to cut flower buds off.
	Complete pruning roses, and prune late-flowering shrubs and trees when dormant
	Drought and hot, dry winds can cause pepper and tomato blossoms to drop off, turn the water on frequently and for a short time to cool the plants, and help those blossoms.
	Most trees, shrubs and perennials will establish on a 2 day per week schedule using drip irrigation.
	Review your watering schedule and make adjustments if necessary, continue to thoroughly water trees, shrubs, planting beds, and lawn areas.
	For irrigation systems that use well water, use a watering schedule that allows the well to recover before its water level drops too far, when the well pump drains the well, it stirs up sediment that can eventually plug up the water filter and even cause an electric valve to malfunction.
Transplant	Fall is the second best time to transplant trees (after spring), wait until the leaves drop and trees are dormant, loosely tie branches to prevent damage, be sure to include sufficient soil around the roots to support them.

November

Plant	Complete planting spring-flowering bulbs.
	Seasonal planting of garden vegetables: As leafy and root vegetables are harvested, replace them with new seedlings of lettuce, spinach and other fast maturing winter vegetables, e aware of the area or zone when you plant.
Plan	Late in the month, use tree paper to wrap around the trunks of saplings and other tender trees to protect them from the dramatic temperature changes ahead.
	Cooler days and nights will be arriving shortly, review your watering schedule and start making adjustments if necessary by removing one or two days from your irrigation schedule.
	Fall is a great time to prepare your vegetable garden for next spring, add manure to the soil, and cover with weed mat or soil.
Garden Essentials	Mulching is one of the best lines of defense for perennial plants against low temperatures, mulching can also prevent winter injury from frost.
	Remove any excessive growth on vines and selectively choose only the wiry growth, make sure not to cut flower buds off.
	Complete removal of fallen leaves and debris to protect from over wintering of insects and disease organisms.
	The best time to water is early in the morning.

December

Relax, enjoy the year end, and do nothing.



Winterizing Your Irrigation System

It is the time of year again to prepare your system for the winter. Please review this article to make sure that you follow all the steps necessary to avoid damage to your system. All sprinkler or drip systems that utilize valves, filters, plastic fittings, PVC pipe, poly pipe, or drip hoses can easily burst if water freezes inside any of these components. This can prove costly to replace or repair. The following steps should be taken to minimize the risk.

Winterizing a sprinkler or drip system will take about fifteen minutes to an hour and must be done before the first freeze. A little bit of your time will result in a low maintenance irrigation system that will reduce the need for replacing frozen parts.

In extremely cold winters, freezing temperatures can severely damage your irrigation system and all the main water lines.

The goal in winterizing an irrigation system is to shut off the water supply to the system, and flush all of the water that is left in the system from the backflow device, valves, filters, main lines, sub-lateral lines, sprinklers, drippers, and drip line.

One way to make sure that the system will not freeze (flat terrain) is to install automatic drain valves in the lowest point of the system. With automatic drain valves it is not necessary to blow out the sprinkler lines with compressed air. The drain valve assures that any water in the line will drain out.



Steps to Take In Early Fall to Assure An Easy Time In The Spring

Step 1

When freezing weather is anticipated, simply turn off your main water supply to the irrigation system and make sure that the valves, backflow device, filter, pressure regulator, pipe, sprinklers, drip hose, and drippers are free of water.

Step 2

After the main water supply is shut down, run the timer/controller through its normal watering cycle. This will allow each of the valves to open and relieve water pressure on the main line and valves. Allow the lines to drain slightly. After the timer/controller runs through its cycles, turn the controller off, or to the Rain Off position.

Step 3

The most important thing to do in very cold temperatures is to wrap all exposed pipe with insulating tape. The insulation should cover everything exposed up to the risers. However, it is unnecessary to wrap sprinkler heads or hose bibs.

Step 4

Through the height of winter, leave the system off and drained. If needed, water your plants and lawns with a hose only. In most cases, there is enough moisture in the ground from rain to sustain the plants and lawns during the extreme winter periods.



Irrigation System Parts



About the Irrigation System Parts

Pumps	<p>Always drain a pump by opening the lowest plug or drain outlet (replace with drain valve). Make sure to check that no water is left inside. Drain plugs are difficult to get to and remove, making an unpleasant project out of a simple task. Along with the pump, drain the suction line. Pull it out of the water, drain it, and cover the open pipes to prevent creatures from making it a winter home.</p>
Gate and Ball Valves	<p>Will not tolerate freezing conditions. The gate valve, when closed, traps water in the bonnet, and the ball valve holds water inside the ball. If the valve is closed when water is in the line and the line drained without opening this valve, the water trapped above the gate or inside the ball will freeze and have no place to expand. A gate valve will split its bonnet and packing nut, or have a hairline crack down its side.</p>
Solenoid Valves	<p>Are best winterized by leaving them open for the winter. The manual bleed lever on the valves varies by model and manufacturer, but is usually a thumb screw on top of the valve or lever on the side of the bonnet (cover).</p>
Automatic Control Valves	<p>Such as pressure reducing, pressure relief or combination valves, containing external control tubing, pilots, and other parts will require special care to thoroughly drain. If the entire unit can be easily removed from the pipe, it may be simple to store the unit in an inside location for the winter. If removing the valve or valve assembly is not practical, remove the control tubing connections in the lower part of the valve to drain all the parts of water. The valve bonnet should also be loosened or removed to remove all the water from the top of the diaphragm by un-tightening the screws on the top of the bonnet.</p>
Drip Hose	<p>Disconnect the drip hose from the filter assembly and wrap the swivel adapter or the connection to the filter assembly with a plastic bag to prevent dirt and contaminants from entering. If the drip hose is installed above ground, open all the ends and allow the water to drain. Then lift the drip hose from the connection of the filter assembly, a few feet at a time and section by section, making sure that any water left in the drip hose will drain out. After you finish draining the drip hose and the micro tubing, make sure to close the ends of the drip tubing using the hose ends.</p>
Valve Assemblies	<p>If the entire assembly can be easily removed from the pipe, the best option is to store the assembly unit from the controller to the pressure regulator in an inside location for the winter. If that is not practical, the valve bonnet should be loosened or removed to remove all the water from the top of the diaphragm. We encourage installation of control valves and assemblies using swivel connections so that these units can be easily detached and stored inside for the freezing months.</p>



Chapter in Review

Seasonal Irrigation

To successfully grow year round, it is important to consider the weather seasonality and various plant life cycles. In this chapter we have covered the best month-by-month planting strategies. Use the list on the right to plan out your ideal month-by-month gardening plan.

If you ever have any questions regarding planting strategies or which products to use, you can always call our Customer Care team at The Drip Store. We're available Monday through Friday, 7 a.m.-4 p.m. (PST) at 760-597-1669 or toll free at 877-597-1669.

My Monthly Gardening Plan

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December
