

SIMPLE IRRIGATION SCHEDULE

Automatic sprinklers are real timesavers, but not necessarily water savers. They do what they are programmed to do. Unfortunately, that doesn't always mean they'll be putting water where and when there is a need.

Nearly 80% of the water consumed in our area is used outdoors. Some simple, well-planned programming of your irrigation system can save water and money.

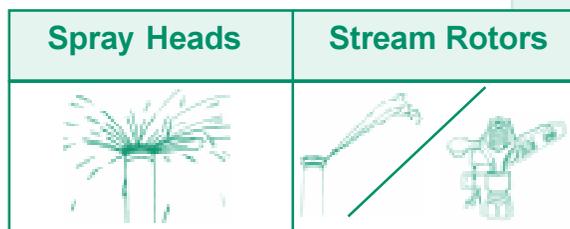
It's quite easy. Just create your own **SIMPLE IRRIGATION SCHEDULE** by following the simple steps below.

1. Learn the language of irrigation.

A *station* controls the water for a specific area of landscaping. Your irrigation system likely has several stations.

A *cycle* is a set number of minutes of watering.

A *sprinkler head* is the brass or plastic fixture that distributes water from the irrigation system. Different types of sprinklers put out differing quantities of water in a given time period. The most common types of sprinkler heads are:



While stream rotors put out more water than spray heads, they distribute the water more broadly, so each area actually receives *less* water than with a spray head. This means that stations with stream rotors need to run longer than those with spray heads.

2. Become familiar with the timer for your irrigation system. (First you have to find it. Likely it's on the wall inside or outside your garage door.) Some are more complex than others, but once you know how, they're simple to re-set. (Much simpler than your VCR.) If you can't find the instructions or figure out the programming for yourself, call the manufacturer or ask at your local hardware store. All systems are fairly similar.

3. Fill in the information for your system on the **SIMPLE IRRIGATION SCHEDULE** noting the type of plants and sprinkler heads for each station. You may want to clip out the completed **SIMPLE IRRIGATION SCHEDULE** and post it near your irrigation timer, as a quick reference and reminder when the seasons change.

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Station Number	Plant Type	Sprinkler Type	Spring		Summer		Fall		Winter	
			minutes	days	minutes	days	minutes	days	minutes	days

4. Reset the cycle time on your irrigation system as seasons change. That's just four times each year.

Use the chart below to determine the correct **CYCLE TIME** and **DAYS PER WEEK** for each station in your system -- according to season. Write these numbers in the correct columns on the **SIMPLE IRRIGATION SCHEDULE** above.

	CYCLE TIME		DAYS PER WEEK
	Spray Heads	Stream Rotors	Spray Heads & Stream Rotors
Spring (Mar-May)	14 minutes	54 minutes	2 days
Summer (Jun-Sep)	14 minutes	54 minutes	3 days
Fall (Oct-Nov)	14 minutes	54 minutes	2 days
Winter (Dec-Feb)	14 minutes	54 minutes	1 day

This may be less than you are currently watering, but it will provide sufficient irrigation for healthy plant growth.



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Helpful water (and dollar)
saving irrigation tips for
homeowners.

Las Virgenes
Municipal Water District

4232 Las Virgenes Road
Calabasas, CA 91302

818.251.2100

Irrigation Hotline

818.251.2160



www.lvmwd.dst.ca.us

- 5. If you are watering** far more than the amount shown, it's best NOT to make large reductions in watering all at once. Gradually cut back on watering and observe how your landscape is responding. If plants in some areas look stressed from lack of water, check to be certain the sprinkler equipment in that area is working properly and that the soil has not become compacted. If there are no signs of plant stress, reduce your watering further. Continue this process until you have reached the recommended level.
- 6. Every property and irrigation system** is different. Once you get the hang of the Simple Irrigation Schedule, you can try your hand at "fine tuning" your schedule (if you can isolate plant areas, irrigate about 20% less than lawn areas). If your soil has high clay content or the terrain is hilly, it may be best to irrigate in two separate cycles. Even a half-hour gap between cycles allows water to absorb into the soil, reducing opportunities for runoff. Just be certain to divide the amount of time, so you'll be applying half the water in each cycle.

Some plantings, such as flowers, may need more frequent watering when they're first planted. Trees can use a deep soak, to reach their deep roots. If you can only water trees along with other plantings, periodically use a deep root feeder (available at most garden stores) to be sure that moisture is getting down to the deep roots.

HELPFUL HINTS

Group plant materials according to water need. That way, you can provide the ideal amount of irrigation for each different type of planting. You won't be over-watering some plants and under-watering others. Not only will you save water, but you'll see better growth and healthier plants.

Lawns are water hogs. It takes more water per square inch to grow lawn than almost any other planting – about 50 inches of water every year. (WOW!!) Limit grass to areas where people walk or play. Use other, less thirsty plants for broad landscape areas.

Take care not to "scalp" when you mow. Leave the blades 2 to 3 inches high for optimal growth and lower water use. (Bermuda grass is an exception and can be cut as low as ¼ to ½ inch.)

Make a quick survey of your irrigation system every month or so. Check for leaks, broken sprinkler heads, and water streams that are off target. Broken sprinklers are water wasters.

Plants don't need rain AND irrigation. In fact, plants can suffer as much from too much water as from too little. Turn off the sprinklers when it rains. Look for the RAIN switch or just turn the system to OFF. After as little as ½ inch of rainfall, you can leave the system off for as long as a week. Post a note on the fridge so you'll be certain to remember to turn it back on.

