

## ***PURISSIMA PIPELINE***

### **“Irrigation Irritation”**

While attending Foothill College for an A.S. degree in Environmental Horticulture, I had two very intense irrigation classes. Because this was a new and somewhat complicated subject for us students, we coined the phrase “Irrigation Irritation”. If learning about the complexities of an irrigation system was complicated for students who had a specific interest in irrigation, it is understandable why many homeowners take a hands-off approach and depend on their landscapers to understand and utilize their irrigation systems properly. But do they?

Many non-licensed landscapers are referred to in the industry as “mowers and blowers”. These small crews maintain the aesthetic look of a landscape and are put in charge of the watering schedule—which *should* make sense: they know the landscape and, therefore, should know its watering requirements. The problem with this theory is that these crews may have many accounts and are rushing from one job to another (more accounts, more income) or the crew members may simply not know how to properly irrigate a landscape without wasting water. If the landscape is green, the customer is satisfied and the landscaper is paid. In my experience, I find that many homeowners take very little interest in their understandably irritating irrigation schedules and rely on their landscapers. I have also found that while some landscapers are familiar with what constitutes proper water application, monitoring, and adjusting of an irrigation system’s schedule when necessary, many are not familiar with proper irrigation techniques. A few of these techniques are:

- ◆ 20 minutes of overhead spray (*sprinkler irrigation*) is **ALWAYS** too much at one time and will result in run-off and wasted water. Much of Los Altos Hills has a high percentage of clay soil that cannot absorb all of the water that overhead spray applies. If an area needs 20 minutes, break up the time into smaller increments so the soil can absorb and the plants can actually use the water.
- ◆ Watering should **NOT** be done in the afternoon. Our pleasant afternoon breezes blow the water droplets from their intended target and increase evaporation loss. Late night and early mornings are less windy; therefore, watering in the early morning or late night hours reduces wind drift and enables better water application.
- ◆ Irrigating on flat areas is MUCH different than irrigating on slopes. Water that is applied on slopes may result in increased run-off. To ensure proper water application for plants, it is imperative to monitor for run-off and to schedule accordingly (see first bullet point).
- ◆ Talk with your landscaper to see if they have your best interest in mind when dealing with your landscape. Find out what actions they have taken to avoid wasting water.

If you are interested in learning more or would like an irrigation evaluation, please call me at (650) 948-1217 or email me at [ashields@purissimawater.org](mailto:ashields@purissimawater.org).

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August 2010

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