HOME GROWN NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2020

Time to Evaluate Your Irrigation System

Paul Winski, Harris County Extension Agent, Horticulture

We are coming to the end of a hot, dry summer; and it is time to think about how well your irrigation system performed.

Did you know?

- In urban areas, about 25% of the water supply is used for landscape and garden watering.
- Most lawns receive twice as much water as they require.

There are several things to consider when evaluating your current system:

- The ideal irrigation system will give plants an adequate amount of water without waste. Properly zone the system so the turf areas are watered separately from the landscape and flowerbeds. Consider using both sprinkler and drip irrigation in the design to achieve an efficient system.

- Overhead sprinkler irrigation is the most common. This can be either the hose-end-sprinkler or the permanent underground system. Both systems require minimal maintenance and apply large volumes of water in a short period. If you have a permanent system, make sure the heads are adjusted properly with regards to coverage and droplet size. If the heads are positioned and adjusted properly, you should not be watering sidewalks and driveways. A properly adjusted head should deliver large droplets of water instead of fog or mist that is more susceptible to evaporation and wind drift.

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- If you had some dry spots throughout the season, you can test the uniformity of your sprinkler coverage with a "catch can test". Click link to perform the test. Click Here

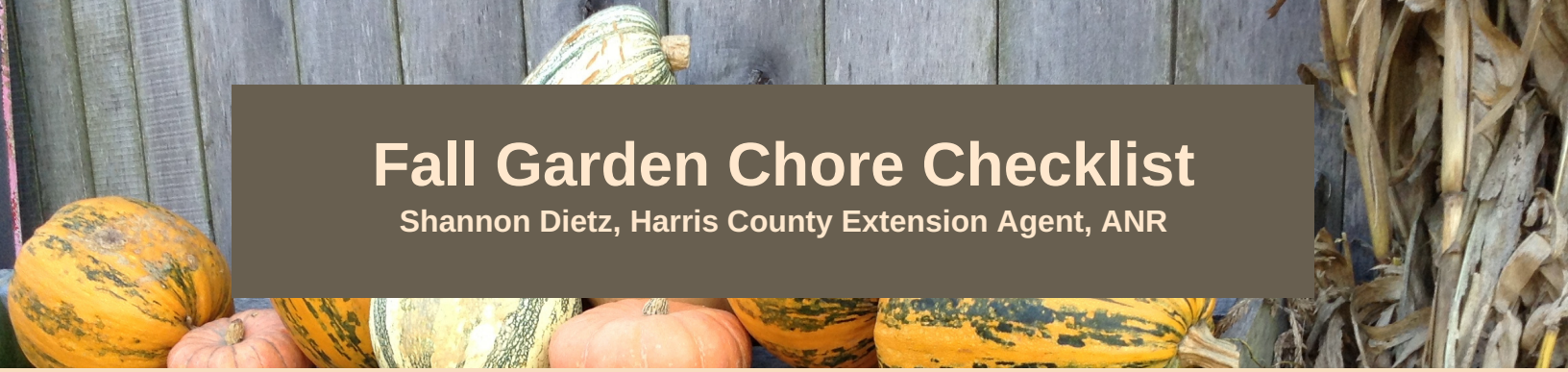
- Drip irrigation works well in the flower and landscape beds. It offers increased watering efficiency when compared to overhead sprinkler irrigation. Drip irrigation slowly applies water to the soil. The water flows under low pressure through emitters or bubblers placed at each plant. This system applies water where the plant needs it, at its roots with little waste.

- Consider a smart irrigation controller. Smart controllers schedule watering based on ET (evapo-transpiration) and/or soil moisture conditions. These systems can result in water savings and applying water only when the plant needs it.

- Install a rain sensor if you do not already have one. How many times have you driven through the neighborhood after a good rain and seen irrigation systems on? Rain sensors interrupt communication between the timers and controller in response to rainfall, thus stopping unneeded irrigation and saving water.

- Consider the "Water My Yard" app developed by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to help you manage your irrigation better in 2021. It's a great tool that allows you to maximize landscape water conservation. Click Here

Take the time to evaluate your system and see where you can make improvements. It will result not only in water savings but also in a sustainable lawn and landscape.



Fall Garden Chore Checklist

Shannon Dietz, Harris County Extension Agent, ANR

Fall is here and the growing season for ornamentals and vegetables is starting to slow down with shorter days and hopefully cooler temperatures! To get a jump on the Spring, now is the time to prepare, treat and maintain your garden, tools, and overall yard maintenance.

To help you prepare your list of things to get in order, I have created a check list to keep you on track...happy gardening!

Bulbs - It's time to plant those spring blooming bulbs. Pay attention to the planting depth as listed on the packages. Dividing perennials is a great way to make your beds fuller and if you have too many of one thing, find another gardener and start a swap - another great way to extend those beds and make new garden buddies.

Potted Plants - If your potted plants are getting root bound and need to be repotted, especially those outdoor tropical's. Add new potting mix and increase the pot by one size to keep them happy through the winter. Make sure to check for insects and hidden critters before bringing any plants inside and consider applying an insecticidal soap to the plant and soil to help with those pesky insects.

Vegetable Plants - Keep pulling up those spindly summer veggies as they ripen., to make room for fall crops. Consider composting the spent plants.

Frosts - Some areas experience early frosts so you should always be prepared for them! If you have tender plants in the ground, be prepared to cover them on those nights with a hard freeze.

Mulch - As leaves start falling, simply add them to your mulch pile, the composting leaf litter can be used to benefit your soil. As leaves start to accumulate, and bagging is a must, use those shredded leaves in your beds providing you with free nutrients for your soil.

Pruning - The fall is a good time for pruning most deciduous trees (trees that lose their leaves in the winter). After the leaves have dropped, pruning becomes a lot easier because you can see the "skeleton" of the tree and they are in dormancy. For proper pruning techniques Click Here

Garden Tool Maintenance - Is always a must! Sanding, sharpening, and oiling will preserve your tools for many seasons to come. Make sure to dip your tools in a bleach/water solution if you had any fungus issues, otherwise, this could carry over into the next season when you use them again. Let them dry, then spray them with any type of oil (boiled linseed and tung oil are the best but use whatever you have).

Power Equipment - It's important to get those tools cleaned up and oil filters changed, blades sharpened, add fuel additives, check pull cords, tires, etc. before putting them away.

Colorful Carnations

Brandi Keller, Master Gardener Program Coordinator

Who says plant projects are just for kids? While they certainly educate on the processes of plants to youth, simple plant projects are for anyone looking to do something different and fun while at home, and this project is easy to adapt for the holiday season. Using dye to color the water, neutral or white flowers/leaves will absorb the dye and change color over a matter of hours or days. This results in a lovely, customized bouquet, but ultimately, this experiment represents how water and nutrients travel in plants.

Steps to create dyed flowers:

1. Prepare flowers or vegetables that will absorb colors, such as white flowers like carnations, or vegetables like celery, or napa cabbage. Flowers can even be cut from the garden.
2. Make fresh cuts at the bottom so they can better absorb water.
3. Fill vases with water. Be sure not to overfill. Filling 1/4 - 1/2 full is sufficient.
4. Add food coloring to water. Quantity will depend on the food coloring used, but be sure the color of the water is fairly dark. If it is too light, the color will not be dark enough. It may take 10-20 drops.
5. Add one or more flowers to each vase and wait for a change. Be sure to keep at least one flower white as a control sample for comparison.

The lessons learned by observing this change in color can vary. First, the dye is stronger at the tips of the flowers. As water is absorbed through roots (or in this case, the cut stem) and up the plant to the stems, leaves, and flowers, transpiration occurs (evaporation of water from a plant.) Transpiration pulls water up behind it through capillary action and when the water evaporates, the dye is left behind.

This project allots for many adaptations. Different types of flowers and vegetables will produce different results. A flower can be placed in a second color a couple days later to see how it changes the color. The stem can be split up the middle and each half placed in two different colors, resulting in a split-toned flower. Artificial food dye and natural dyes will produce different results. Despite the multiple variables and outcomes, this is a project that can be done at home with very little resources. Try creating a boquet with holiday colors!

Holiday Recipe

Brandi Keller, Master Gardener Program Coordinator

Please enjoy this recipe from the Learn, Grow, Eat & Go Program provided by Junior Master Gardeners. Please click on the link below for the video for this recipe and much more:

Click Here

A. Cinnamon Carrot Crunch

Learn, Grow, Eat & GO!

Prep time: 15 minutes
Serves: 12
Serving Size: 1/4 cup

Utensils needed
- Peeler
- Knife
- Cutting board
- Large mixing bowl
- Measuring spoons
- Measuring cup
- Mixing spoon

Nutrition Facts
Serving Size 1/4 cup
Servings Per Container 12

Amount Per Serving
Calories 70 Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g 0%
Satur
Trans
Cholest
Sodium
Total Ca
Dieta
Suga
Protein
Vitamin
Calcium
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Ingredients
- 4 medium carrots, grated
- 2 medium apples, chopped
- 1 celery rib, chopped
- 1 tablespoon of lemon juice
- 3/4 cup of raisins (soak them overnight in 1 cup of water in the refrigerator)
- 3/4 cup of vanilla yogurt
- 1 teaspoon of cinnamon

Directions
1. Wash your hands and clean your cooking area.
2. Wash the carrots, apples, and celery.
3. With a knife or peeler, peel the carrots.
4. Chop the carrots, apples, and celery, and place them in large mixing bowl.
5. Add the lemon juice, raisins, yogurt, and cinnamon to the bowl of chopped carrots, apples, and celery.
6. Stir them until they are coated evenly.
7. Chill the salad before serving it.

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How the children can help: Wash the produce, peel the carrots, measure the ingredients, and stir the salad

Upcoming Events!

HOME GROWN LECTURE SERIES

November/December 2020

Join us on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. CST

November 5th
Plant Disease Identification
Paul Winski, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Horticulture

November 12th
Fall Gardening Chores
Shannon Dietz, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Agriculture & Natural Resources

November 19th
Holiday Plant Care
Brandi Keller, Harris County Master Gardener Program Coordinator

December 3rd
Food Preservation
Amanda Krippel, Texas A&M AgriLife County Extension Agent-Family & Community Health

December 10th
Ask the Agent/Open Forum

To register for this free event, please visit
https://homegrown2020november.eventbrite.com/

A link to the program will be emailed before the webinar.

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

HARRIS COUNTY TEXAS

Contacts/Hope & Anxiety Study/Websites

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Social Media/Websites

Harris County Ag & Natural Resources Facebook

Harris County Master Gardeners Facebook

Horticulture YouTube Channel

Harris County AgriLife Website

Harris County Horticulture Facebook

Horticulture Therapy Survey

Colleagues from Texas State University and Mississippi State University are conducting a collaborative research project on the benefits of gardening and levels of hope and anxiety. Your response to this survey will help to determine how gardening affects your well-being. ***To complete the survey click here.***

For questions please contact us at:
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