

# NORTHERN

# Gardener

CREATING & CARING FOR YOUR ENVIRONMENT

## Landscape Irrigation

### Why an Irrigation System?

#### Investment Protection

The investment you have made in your home is one of the largest you will make in your lifetime. For many families the investment in landscaping their homes can exceed 10% of the value of the property.

A well-designed and installed Landscape Irrigation System is a must to protect this investment and enhance the property value.

#### A Lush Landscape

The root system of your lawn is very shallow, usually only 2-4 inches deep. During even a short dry spell, your soil and lawn begin to dry out. When this

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- ✓ Install water control devices (also known as rain checks) to avoid overwatering.
- ✓ Have your irrigation system checked regularly by a professional to ensure correct application rates.

occurs, your entire lawn begins to go dormant in order to conserve available moisture. Unfortunately, many common weeds thrive in dry conditions and begin to choke out the grasses you wish to preserve.

Likewise, flowering plants and shrubs will prosper only when regular, periodic water is applied in carefully measured amounts.

#### Over-Watering vs. Under-Watering

Haphazard watering with a garden hose almost always results in overwatering some areas at the expense of other areas. Sprinklers attached to hoses may water the area intended but often also those areas not intended, such as the house, street, driveway, etc. And how often do you forget to turn off the hose at the proper time?

A well-designed Landscape Irrigation System will deliver the correct amount of water to the proper areas of your landscape and supplement that which nature provides.

#### Conservation

All of us must do our part. And the place to start is with the most precious natural resource of all. Water.

If you're like most homeowners you're using up to 50% more water than your landscape requires. That's neither good for the pocketbook, nor beneficial for the lawn. More water does not always mean more beautiful results.

The solution isn't just watering less. It's watering more scientifically. The right amount of water, evenly distributed in the right places at the right time.



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It is also important to assure even application rates. The practice is known as “matched precipitation” and is accomplished by matching sprinkler types and sizes during the design phase of your installation.

Most systems even come with a ‘Rain Switch’ that will automatically turn the system off during, or after a rainfall. A properly designed and installed Landscape Irrigation System makes all this possible.

The components of your new Landscape Irrigation System will be buried - out of sight. Once installed, your new system essentially becomes a permanent fixture of your home.

The experience of the contractor you select to design and install your new Irrigation System is crucial in determining the efficiency and long - term reliability of the system.

It is an important decision, but selecting the right contractor isn't as difficult as it may seem.

## ***A Comprehensive Design***

In order to engineer a new Landscape Irrigation System properly, expect the contractor you select to collect detailed information regarding your property including: soil type; plants, existing and proposed; water source, flow rates and pressure; landscape contours. Expect the contractor to present a scale drawing of your property depicting the proposed system.

## ***Contractor Quality Parts***

Most manufacturers of lawn sprinkler equipment have two different grades:

- A.) Parts for sale by discount stores for installation by the home owner. These are designed to be price competitive, inexpensive, disposable parts.
- B.) Contractor quality components that are designed to withstand the rigors of severe environments. These materials will provide many years of dependable service.

## ***A Professional Contractor***

Professional contractors have made a commitment to the enhancement of the irrigation industry. These contractors understand that you are one of their most valuable assets and will do a great deal to ensure your satisfaction.

When choosing a contractor, be wary of those who offer to charge you significantly less than others. ‘Low bidders’ may not be licensed or insured and often use cost-cutting techniques that can harm your landscape. Watch out for these commonly used tricks of the trade:

- Not including a pressure backflow preventor which is required by State Plumbing Codes to protect your drinking water.
- Installing sprinklers too far apart, which makes it impossible for certain areas to receive enough water and causes brown spots during the hot summer months.
- Mixing sprinklers with different application rates on the same zone. This causes one area to be overwatered in order to sufficiently water another.
- Not using proper water-tight wire connectors and a protective valve box to safeguard the electrical elements and guard against short circuits.

## ***Warranty and Maintenance Services***

Another key to a long lasting irrigation system is also a good maintenance program. Most well-installed systems need little more than “seasonal maintenance.” However, on those occasions when repairs are necessary, the best service firms will not only use professional quality parts but also assure the system continues to operate in an efficient, water conserving manner.

The promised warranty will ultimately be only as good as the firm behind it. Expect the contractor you select to provide a written warranty before you buy. Verify the promise by checking references or the Better Business Bureau.



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