



Professional Landscaping Tips: Summertime Water Management

*By Ronny Nelson, Horticulturist, Board Certified Master Arborist and
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When you walk outside to 100-degree weather, every instinct in your body tells you to retreat. Our landscape kind of does the same thing. Did you know that plants cannot transpire water or create photosynthesis in 100-degree weather? At 95-degrees Fahrenheit, all plant biological and physiological functions slow down. This means plants are unable to cool off and create food from sunlight. When plants are not actively growing, they go into respiration, which means they are feeding on their stored carbohydrates.

So how do I help my plants get through this heat? Proper watering is key to maintaining a beautiful landscape. Slow, deep watering is the preferred method for watering. This helps the water penetrate deeper in the soil and is more likely to be available to plants for a longer duration.

When setting your irrigation system, set it to run several times within your specified watering day. A good rule of thumb on somewhat level landscapes is to set a spray zone about 7-8 minutes and a rotor zone 16-18 in black clay soil. Anything higher will likely run off, rather than be absorbed by the soil. Allow about 45-60 minutes before setting the irrigation to come on again. Multiple start times allow gravity to pull water downward and become available to the plants for a longer duration. 2-3 start times on your specified watering day is often necessary in the North Texas heat.

Water restrictions in most cities in Collin and Denton County only allow 2-days per week for outside water. This does not mean you cannot hand water, use drip irrigation or soaker hoses.

It is important to keep sensitive plants hydrated on non-watering days. Hand watering seasonal color, non-established and other sensitive plants is often necessary. Most water restrictions do not restrict drip irrigation, so set it to run as needed. Inspect the soil to make sure you are not keeping it too wet. If it begins to have an odor, like rotten eggs, reduce your watering immediately and see if you have a drainage issue.

Scouting for drought stress is important. I prefer to do my inspections in the morning, so that the plants may restore their hydration overnight. Often plants appear to be wilting in the afternoon, because of the heat. Remember they can not transpire (cool themselves) above 95-degrees Fahrenheit. So, let's get out there early and beat the heat!

Sincerely,

Ronny Nelson, BCMA