

WATER MANAGEMENT

As we move into the Fall, irrigation continues to become a focus for our crew and irrigation technicians. This summer brought on a relief in irrigation budgets with various agencies updating their allocations to allow for a greater budget, but not back to where we were in years past. The following main water agencies have updates on their websites with the current drought restrictions:

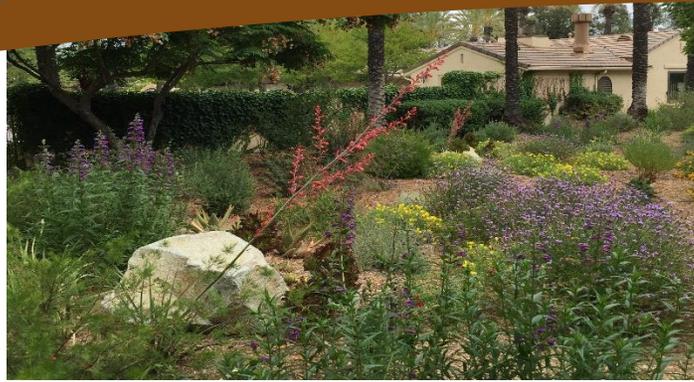
 Rancho California Water District: ranchowater.com

 Eastern Municipal Water District: emwd.org/use-water-wisely/California-drought

 Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District: evmwd.com/news

 Western Municipal Water District: ca-wmwd2.civicplus.com/391/Drought-Restrictions

While we may not be in an emergency water shortage, California is still in a drought and we need to manage this resource accordingly. Your account manager can provide you an update specific to your community, discuss ideas on how to implement action items to convert grass areas into California friendly landscaping.



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Green Waste

Environmental Concepts is a strong supporter of and advocate for sustainability. One important element of the resource recovery process is a formidable green waste program.

Most of us are familiar with the term "green waste." It is the spoils from gardening and landscape maintenance. Environmental Concepts collects about 1,500 cubic yards of green waste a month from our jobs sites. So where does all this material go?

Leaves, grass clippings, and shrub and small tree branches are collected and bundled on site. The bundles are transported at the end of the day to 40-yard roll-off dumpsters at our various job sites and service yards. The containers are collected several times a week, depending on the time of year and size of the job, by a waste management company where they are taken to an approved green waste collection center. Branches from our tree trimming operations are chipped on site and fed directly into a chipper truck. The chipper trucks are emptied at the end of each day and taken directly to one of our green waste collection centers.

The green waste collection centers mix the landscape spoils with other organic materials, including soil, where they are stockpiled into large mounds. Because the green waste materials are organic, they begin the natural process of decomposition. The composted mounds are remixed on a regular basis, moving the materials from the bottom of the piles to the top. This process continues until the materials reach their finished product stage as "mulch."

Mulch is required as a soil cover in all groundcover and shrub areas. The mulch acts to minimize water loss through evaporation and to maintain soil moisture levels. Other benefits of mulch include weed reduction, erosion control, and the replenishment of nutrients back into the soil. Organic mulch does compress and decompose over time, and therefore must be "topped off" or replaced in order to maintain its effectiveness. A minimum 2" to 3" layer of mulch is the industry standard. Our maintenance practices include adding a fresh layer of mulch following shrub and groundcover area maintenance, thus completing the full circle.



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BENEFITS OF MULCH

Mulching is considered not only an aesthetic finishing product to a planter bed, but it can also provide substantial benefits to your overall environment.

Following are some of the biggest advantages of mulch:

- Controlling Weeds:** By placing a barrier that blocks sunlight from reaching new weed seeds and preempting them from germinating.
- Retaining Moisture:** Providing a protective barrier also helps to maintain our precious resource water, where we want it.
- Earthworm Habitat:** By providing organic material, it encourages earthworms to move in and they in turn improve the soil structure and nutrient cycling.
- Replenishing Soil Nutrients:** By choosing an organic mulch, you can replenish much needed nutrients back into your growing environment.
- Erosion Prevention:** We covered that mulch can help retain water, but it can also protect the soil beneath from washing away.

When adding mulch consider the various types available in the market and those that fit your needs. Avoid piling up mulch against trunks of trees or stems of plant, giving them plenty of room to breathe. A good rule of thumb is placing 2" to 3" of mulch for most plants. With mulch plan on replenishing as it diminishes or breaks down. The investment will pay in the long run.

Drip Irrigation System Maintenance

Routine maintenance is vital in keeping your irrigation system operating at its peak level. The following maintenance tips are directed at drip systems.

Drip irrigation offers an alternative and a solution to the outdoor watering under current drought restrictions. By directing the water to the targeted plant materials (trees and shrubs) drip systems improve irrigation efficiency, thus reducing water costs. It is important however, to maintain your system in order to maintain its efficiency. The three most important system maintenance items are; checking the water filter, looking for leaks and broken connectors, and checking for clogged emitters and supply lines.

Water passes through a control valve, a pressure reducer and finally through a water filter, called a Y-Filter, in route to the supply lines. The water filter removes unwanted debris and particles that have entered the water system. Water filter performance is critical to maintain proper system pressure and to minimize emitter clogging, and should be checked frequently, especially at the start-up of new systems.

Supply lines (½" black plastic tubing) deliver water to the drip emitters. Most supply lines are buried or covered with mulch, making it difficult to identify leaks and



and their locations. Because drip station times run from 10 to 15 minutes, a leak can result in substantial water loss. Identifying the locations of the supply lines and connectors can simplify the maintenance process. Look for water sprays when the system is running, or wet areas in the mulch along the supply line routes. These are indications of a broken or loose connection.

Drip emitters can either be attached directly to the supply lines or connected to the ends of the ¼" distribution tubing. Distribution tubing is most often covered with mulch, making it difficult to determine if there is a leak or if an emitter is clogged. A visual inspection is the only successful means of locating a problem. But before you check each emitter individually while the system is running, check to see whether the soil around the plant materials is damp. This can tell if there might be a clogged emitter, or whether the plants are getting enough water.

It is recommended that all irrigation systems be checked routinely – not just drip systems. A good rule of thumb is to perform a system check when watering times are adjusted to adapt to seasonal changes.

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