



Monsoon Rains Provide FREE Water!

Some areas of Gilbert have received generous rains this summer due to the monsoon. This free water, courtesy of Mother Nature, may mean you can turn off your automatic irrigation system for a few days.

If your home receives at least one-half inch of rain, you can skip an irrigation cycle. Turn your irrigation controller off (switch it to "off" or "stop" or "stop rain"). This won't erase your program; it will merely stop the controller from running the irrigation until you turn it back on.

A rain gauge at your home is one of the easiest ways to determine how much rain fell, but you can also check the internet. One site to try is from Maricopa County Flood Control District at <http://www.fcd.maricopa.gov/Services/ALERT/Rainfall.asp>.

Keep an eye on your landscape to determine when you need to turn the controller back on. A simple way to tell when to water again is to use a soil probe or long screwdriver. Your plants need water again when you cannot easily slide the probe into the soil. Then just turn your irrigation controller to the "on" or "run" position.

Studies have found that automatic sprinkler systems actually lead to more water consumption because they let us maintain a yard without thinking about how much water we put on it. According to the study by American Water Works Association:

- Homes with in-ground sprinklers used 35 percent more water than homes without them.
- Homes using a timer consumed 47 percent more water than those that didn't, mostly, experts say, because homeowners don't know how to use the timers properly, so they let the sprinklers run too often, too long or both.
- Homes with drip irrigation systems used 16 percent more water than those without the system.
- When people water by hand, they use one-third less water than other households.

If you can operate a cell phone, you can easily learn to set your irrigation timer. If you don't have a manual or owner's guide for your irrigation controller, just contact the manufacturer to request one. Most have manuals available on-line to download; some even have on-line interactive help guides. Nearly all have toll-free numbers that you can call for help when setting your timer. Here's a list of common manufacturers.

Rain Bird	1-800-724-6247	http://www.rainbird.com/
Hunter	1-800-733-2823	http://www.hunterindustries.com/
Nelson	1-800-622-8024	http://www.nelsonirrigation.com/
Rain Dial (Irritrol)	1-800-634-8873	http://www.irritrol.com/
Toro	1-800-367-8676	http://www.toro.com/
Hardie	(recently acquired by Toro)	
Richdel (Lawn Genie)	1-800-231-5117	http://www.lawngenie.com/

Experts recommend that you adjust your irrigation clock according to the seasons, applying water less often in the cool months than in the summer. Some people reset their timers each month while others wait to do it quarterly.

Remember that if you have experienced a power outage your irrigation clock may need to be re-programmed. Some irrigation clocks have a battery back-up that will hold your programs until power is restored, others do not. If yours doesn't have a battery, or if the battery is dead, the timer's default program takes over if power is lost. It will run every station for 10 minutes every day which will hopefully keep your plants alive until you reset it. It's a good idea to replace the battery once each year.

If you're not sure how often or how long to water, use the landscape watering guidelines at <http://www.ci.gilbert.az.us/water/popups/guidelines.cfm> or request a free copy of Landscape Watering by the Numbers by calling 480-503-6098.

Rain sensors also can save water by overriding clocks during rainy periods. The sensor automatically shuts off the irrigation system when the moisture level in the soil reaches a specified amount. Your watering cycles automatically resume when soils dry out. These can be added to existing irrigation timers.



The water conservation office has a limited number of rain gauges available to Gilbert residents. These cannot be mailed and must be picked up at 90 E. Civic Center Drive in the Town's municipal complex. Call 480-503-6896 to request your free rain gauge.

Be sure to visit the Town of Gilbert Water Conservation web pages for free landscape workshops, landscaping tips, water audits, frequently asked questions and more.

<http://www.ci.gilbert.az.us/water>

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