

Water Smart™

WINTERIZING THE LANDSCAPE

To avoid damage, many irrigation systems require winterization each year before the first freeze. Backflow prevention devices are required and regulated by municipalities, and proper winterization can be complex. Homeowners unsure of proper winterization techniques should call a licensed contractor.



THE BASICS

If your system requires draining, here are some general guidelines.

1. Turn off water to the irrigation system at the main valve. The shutoff valve should be below the freeze line (the depth to which the ground may freeze) or in a heated environment.
2. Insulate and drain the backflow prevention device and valves*. Insulation blankets can be purchased at irrigation supply stores. Heat tape or a hot box enclosure is highly recommended.
3. It may not be necessary to drain underground pipes if they are below the freeze line.
4. Turn on an irrigation zone to release pressure in the pipes and open all manual drain valves.
5. Set the automatic irrigation controller to the off setting.
6. Drain all water from irrigation components that might freeze.

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SPRING RESTART

Restart is as important as winterization.

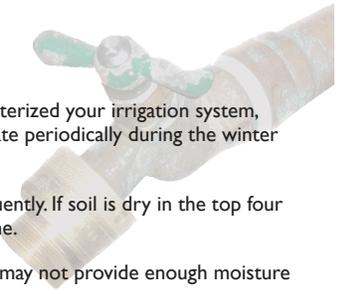
1. Turn on water to the irrigation system at the main valve.
2. Close all manual drain valves.
3. Check the system by running each zone. Look for leaking valves, clogged emitters and nozzles.
4. If the system uses a backup battery, replace it with the manufacturer's recommended type.
5. Program each zone for correct run times. Reset timer seasonally to avoid over/under watering.

WINTER LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

The unique winter climate of north-central Arizona often requires supplemental irrigation. Freezing temperatures remove humidity from the air. During winter, evergreen plants require more moisture than deciduous plants. Plant roots continue to grow in winter. Therefore, maintaining some soil moisture during the winter months is critical.

THE BASICS

- Although you may have winterized your irrigation system, you will likely need to irrigate periodically during the winter months.
- Monitor soil moisture frequently. If soil is dry in the top four inches, irrigate the root zone.
- Light snow and rain events may not provide enough moisture to the root zone.
- Careful use of automatic irrigation systems may be appropriate provided they are properly re-winterized after each use.
- 2 – 4" of mulch in non-turf areas will reduce soil moisture loss and moderate soil temperature fluctuations.
- Within your landscape there may be several different microclimates. A microclimate is an isolated area that has different climatic conditions than the surrounding area. This can result from several factors such as: shade, wind, reflected heat, northern and southern exposures, etc.
- Familiarize yourself with the unique microclimates within your landscape. Manage different microclimates appropriately. For example, southern exposures should be monitored more frequently for soil moisture content.



For more information and helpful community links, visit the Coalition website at

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