

# Rosewood Garden Designs

Classic American and European Gardens  
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## **BASIC GUIDE LINES FOR PROPER WATERING WITH AN IRRIGATION SYSTEM**

There are a few basic facts that will help you fully understand the importance of properly setting your irrigation system. All plants are only as good as the root system. If the root system is unhealthy then the plant will not develop to its potential. Most plants do not like to sit in water as this allows the growth of fungus and disease, as well as reduces the oxygen available to the plant. Plants do best with a good soaking then drying out to the point of needing more water. This increases root development, creating a good, solid root system. Since the Piedmont region is mostly clay soil, which is rich in nutrients, it is too dense to allow roots and water to penetrate easily. Amending the soil with a coarser material eliminates this problem.

Plants should be watered as infrequently, yet as thoroughly, as possible. On the following page, you will find starting guidelines for the proper length of time and how frequently to run each zone in your irrigation system. Each property is different, and for best results, it is strongly recommended that you take the time, for the first month of watering, to inspect each zone and make adjustments as needed.

An irrigation system not only needs to be designed properly, but it also needs to be programmed correctly. As demand for water increases, so does the cost and the concern for its availability. Increasingly, states are requiring the use of special water saving controllers and heads. Retrofitting a system can result in significant savings, often 60%-80% of water use. Whether you choose to retrofit your system or not, it only makes sense to get the best out of it that you can. Watering the right amount, the right frequency, the right time (very early morning, before daylight is best) will all save you money, improve the health of your plants and save a precious resource.

The following are intended as basic guidelines. We are licensed irrigation contractors, and will be happy to look at your system – just give us a call.

## TYPES OF ZONES

### **Rotors:**

These are heads in your grass areas. They rotate and spray out anywhere from 20-60 feet.

### **Sprays:**

Used for smaller areas, 4 to 18 feet, and do not rotate, but many put out as much water, if not more, than rotor heads. You will want to set these zones with much less time than the rotors.

### **Drip:**

Plant material will have drip lines laid in beds with emitters at each plant. Each emitter only puts out between .5 to 2 gallons/hour. These zones will need to run much longer and less frequently than either the rotors or sprays.

### **Watering Grass:**

Fescue roots need to be 6 to 8 inches deep. This helps the plants survive in the heat of the summer. The average amount of time to run a rotor zone is 8 to 10 minutes before runoff. Therefore, it is best to set rotor zones to start at least 2 times, 2 hours apart on the same day, allowing the water to soak in. If you are trying to water a slope, it might take 3 start times per day. Begin with 2 start times for 10 minutes, 2 hours apart. Never water every day, even in the heat of the summer. At most, water every other day, but better yet, every 3<sup>rd</sup> day. The same is true for spray zones, but set the time for 3 to 8 minutes.

### **Watering Beds:**

With a properly prepared plant bed, there is no need to water more than 1 time on any given day. Because drip irrigation puts out small amounts of water, it is necessary to water less frequently for longer periods of time than for grass. Set these zones for 30 to 45 minutes. The maturity and/or type of your plant material will determine how many times a week they are set. For established plants, once a week is more than enough, and some can go every two weeks. For newly installed plants, you might need to water every other day for awhile. Then reduce the number of days per week. I do not recommend watering drip zones for less than 30 minutes. Soak the ground thoroughly, and then let it dry out.

Thank you

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