

## Rain Sensors to be given away to Homeowners in Highlands County

Over 1,000 Highlands County residents benefited from a Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) Community Education grant that was awarded to the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District (HSWCD) last year. Thousands upon thousands of gallons of water is saved daily as a result of the low-flow shower heads that were given away to citizens with the funds from that grant. We, at HSWCD are happy to announce that we have been awarded the Community Education grant again this year and we are going to be giving away free rain sensors to the citizens of Highlands County.

The HSWCD and Highlands County Extension are teaming up and plan to give presentations to the homeowners associations in Highlands County. These presentations will include information about the free rain sensors, how to install them and what their function is. In addition, the Extension staff will present on Florida Friendly landscaping and irrigation. A representative from Florida Irrigation Supply, Inc. will be on hand to explain the technical information about the sensors and answer questions. These presentations are put together to encourage homeowners to save and conserve water around their homes.

How many times have you been driving along in the rain and seen someone's lawn sprinklers going off? All of that water is being wasted and water is such a precious resource that we really can't afford to be wasting it.

Rain sensors are designed to determine if enough rainfall has occurred in order to skip an irrigation cycle. This keeps your system from over watering your lawn. The electrical connection between the sensor and your sprinkler system controller is interrupted when a certain amount of rain triggers the device. The sensor breaks the electrical connection so that electricity cannot flow to either the sprinkler valves or to a pump start.

The rain sensors that will be purchased from the grant funds will be the Hunter Rain-Clik and Mini-Clik brands. According to the irrigation experts, "Most rain sensing devices must first accumulate a set amount of rainfall before a switch is activated that interrupts the circuit from the controller and shuts off the system. In that "accumulation time," the system will continue to water. Only this type of sensor with its unique quick response feature, can command the controller to shut off immediately when it starts to rain. The devices can be mounted on an eave or any flat vertical surface like a wall or fence."

Rain sensors can benefit you, the homeowner, in many ways:

- **SAVES MONEY.** Whether you pay for city water or spend electricity running a pump, the money you save over time will more than pay for the rain sensor.
- **EXTENDS SPRINKLER SYSTEM LIFE SPAN.** Irrigation systems are made up of moving parts. If the system parts are utilized less frequently (during the rainy season), they last longer.
- **PROTECTS WATER RESOURCES.** By limiting the over use of your sprinkler system, rain sensors reduce excess water run-off that carries fertilizers and pest control chemicals into our shared water supply.

- CONSERVES WATER. Less water is wasted when less supplemental water is needed for your turf and in your garden.

According to some studies in Florida, the use of rain sensors averaged a 45% savings in water for single-family residential water use.

To know what type of rain sensor your system requires, you need to know what type of system you have (i.e. 24 volt or 220 timer). Even if you aren't a member of one of the homeowner's associations that we will be presenting to, you can purchase a rain sensor for your system at a local hardware store or off the Internet. They are relatively inexpensive and the money you save on your water bill, will more than make up for the cost.