

News from the Watershed

Rain Sensors make good conservation sense

At this time, all of us are going through the challenge of dealing with water restrictions. We know that we can only water at certain times of the week and only for a given amount of time. So, we are all doing our part to conserve our precious water, but I have another suggestion – rain sensors for your irrigation system! Why water when it's raining? A rain sensor is a device designed to prevent an automatic irrigation or sprinkler system from turning on during and after a rain storm. These simple devices are available in several designs, and are generally wired to an irrigation system controller, although wireless sensors are also on the market. Rain sensors are simple, economical and useful tools for preventing irrigation that would be wasteful.

Rain sensors are a great idea for many reasons. They let your sprinklers run only when needed, which conserves water, saves money, and protects lawns from the effects of over watering. In addition, they extend irrigation system life by automatically measuring precipitation and keeping irrigation systems from watering in rainy conditions. Rain sensors override a scheduled irrigation when a water collection cup or sensor on the shutoff device detects water. When the collected rainwater has evaporated from the device, scheduled irrigations resume.

Let's go over some of the benefits of rain sensors again:

- Most importantly, they save water
- They save you money by reducing your utility bills
- They reduce the wear and tear on your irrigation system, because it only comes on when needed
- They protect your lawn and plants from over watering.

You can receive a free rain sensor by attending the Rain Barrel/Water Conservation workshop scheduled for June 19th at the Agricultural Center from 10am to 12pm. Or you can purchase rain sensors at your local hardware store and they are relatively inexpensive. You will most likely make up the expense within the first few months by reducing your utility bill costs. So it would seem that these sensors are a win-win solution for our water conservation needs.

Listed below are some additional ways to conserve water:

- Check your irrigation system regularly. One broken sprinkler head could use up to 225 gallons per 15 minute cycle.
- Install water-saving shower heads or flow restrictors.
- Check for leaky faucets and toilets and repair as needed
- Wash full loads of laundry. A washing machine can use 40 or more gallons of water per load.
- Make sure your dishwasher loads are full. Dishwashers use about 15 gallons per run.

And as far as the water restrictions go, let's just go over the rules again, if your house number ends in a 0 or 1 you may water on Monday, if it ends with 2 or 3 Tuesday is your day, 4 or 5 is Wednesday watering, 6 and 7 allows you to water Thursday and finally if your house number ends in 8 or 9 you can water on Friday. Properties less than two acres can water only during the hours between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. Properties over two acres can water only between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. These rules apply to all residences within the unincorporated Highlands County using the water resources, whether from public or privately owned water utility systems, private wells, or private connections with surface water bodies.

Hopefully you are now motivated to install rain sensors on your irrigation system as well as conserve in other ways. You will be doing the right thing and helping to conserve this important resource.