

Watch That Water - By Stan Southwick



The last few months we have discussed the proper way to prune different types of plant material. Proper pruning is critical to the health, vitality and appearance of any plant. There is, however, something even more important... water. Without life-giving water, there is no pruning. In our desert environment there are two types of irrigation systems generally used, overhead spray and drip. Proper maintenance of your irrigation system is as important as proper pruning of your plants.

Irrigation systems for large sites can be designed to monitor the irrigation system on a continuous basis. Reporting any pipe breaks or leaks and identifying electrical connection and communication issues. They can also control the exact amount of water required for a specific site if connected to a weather station. Most homeowners don't have these high-tech systems so the burden of monitoring the irrigation falls on you and me. Set your irrigation controller on a 2-minute water cycle and run through all the stations. Walk around and visually observe the water coming out of the nozzles or emitters. Make any minor repairs as needed. This should be done monthly until it gets hot, then check at least weekly. I walk my yard every day or two during the hot summer months to see if any plants are showing signs of stress that might indicate an irrigation problem.

You will notice that your drip emitters will tend to get water deposits around the orifice. These deposits can clog emitters or drastically reduce their efficiency. As you check your system, you may notice an emitter that is squirting instead of dripping or that has stopped working all together. Keeping them clean is difficult but using low amounts of acid in a fertilizer injection system can help. I usually just replace the emitter when the deposits restrict the correct water flow. Adjust spray heads to reduce overspray and only provide water where it is needed.

Check your irrigation system regularly and keep a few irrigation replacement parts on hand for quick fixes. An efficient irrigation system will help you grow a beautiful landscape and reduce costs associated with water waste.

"If you truly love Nature, you will find beauty everywhere."
— Vincent Van Gogh

Favorite Flora:

Parkinsonia praecox- Palo Brea- By Jon Marenfeld



This month's favorite flora is a plant that is considered one of the most attractive and sculptural desert trees. The Palo Brea (*Parkinsonia praecox*) is sought after for its unique natural beauty. Its native range is from South America through northern Mexico. Palo Brea is similar to the more widely used Desert Museum Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia x 'Desert Museum'*) in that it has green bark and is flush with yellow flowers in spring. Compared with other palo verdes, *Parkinsonia praecox* has a more twisted and picturesque form, is larger in stature, and its distinctive green bark, that smoothly drapes over the trunk and branches, goes all the way to the ground. In spring its branches are coated with bright yellow flowers.

Reaching heights and widths of 15-30 feet the Palo Brea is an excellent choice for a specimen tree, and focal point, in any desert landscape. Plant this tree in low to no traffic areas (thorns), in well-draining soils, and in full sun, and areas with reflected heat. Care is similar to most desert trees in that less is more. Once established this tree requires little supplemental irrigation. Because it has thorns pruning can be tricky. Pruning should be to reinforce the structure or form of the tree and no more than 30% of the canopy should be removed in summer. Removing too much could lead to sunburn. Pair with other desert natives such as cacti, agave, desert spoons, orange lantana, and boulders for a uniquely southwestern look.

Photo of the Month



Imperial Palace Watchtower
Tokyo, Japan
Cassi Dawes