As weather cools, customers advised to reduce irrigation

RIVERSIDE, CA – As the days of fall grow shorter and cooler, Western Municipal Water District reminds water customers to adjust their irrigation timers to save money and water while best serving plants.

“Reducing irrigation in cooler months is a triple win for customers,” said Craig Miller, Western’s general manager. “It’s cost-effective, good for our ecosystem, and helps individual landscapes thrive.”

In western Riverside County, plants require about 50 percent of the water in October that they need in July, the region’s hottest month. By January, that number falls to just 35 percent.

These ratios apply to all landscapes and all types of irrigation, said Pam Pavela, Western’s water resources specialist.

“Fall back isn’t just for clocks,” said Pavela. “If a lawn in Riverside needs seven-plus inches of water in July, it will need about four inches in October. “If a tree needs about four inches in July (what the average tree needs in Riverside), it will need two inches in October.”

However, because the days still seem warm in October, and fall dawns gradually, many customers postpone such adjustments. This can lead to overwatering and bloated water bills.

To decrease irrigation, Western suggests cutting the number of watering days per week, not the intervals (which avoid runoff) per watering day or the minutes per cycle. Pavela said, “Let the soil dry down between watering days. For plant health, it is best to water deeply but infrequently.”

Indeed, by adjusting irrigation timers as seasons change, customers can contain costs, conserve a limited resource and keep plants strong. Benefits include:

Saving money. Each customer receives monthly allotments of affordable water for health/hygiene and landscaping; rates are lowest when water use is efficient. While inexpensive indoor allotments stay consistent year round, low-cost outdoor allocations climb in summer and dip in fall and winter, to sync with plants’ needs. Thus, customers avoid higher fall/winter bills by cutting irrigation in cooler months.

Conserving water. Using water efficiently not only keeps water bills low, but also helps us, as a region, conserve a limited resource in arid, drought-prone California.
Protecting plants. Did you know that up to 80 percent of all plant illness is caused by overwatering? For plants to thrive, they need different amounts of water throughout the year based on weather and length of daylight. Curtailing irrigation in fall and winter helps keep plants healthy.

For details on recommended watering schedules based on types of sprinklers and plants, visit https://www.wmwd.com/DocumentCenter/View/382/Schedule-Irrigation?bidId=.

For more information about water efficiency, visit www.wmwd.com/263/Water-Use-Efficiency or call 951.571.7104.

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Western Municipal Water District is one of the largest public agencies in Riverside County providing water and sewer services to nearly a million people, both retail and wholesale customers who live, work and play within 527-square miles in one of California’s most populous regions.