



JULY-AUGUST 2016

Inside College Station

* * * * * CITY OF COLLEGE STATION * Home of Texas A&M University® * College Station, Texas * * * * *

You can **save water** and **Spruce Up** Your Sprinkler System



Outdoor water usage accounts for up to 80 percent of home water use in the summer. With July being Smart Irrigation Month, this is the perfect time to improve the efficiency of your outdoor irrigation system. The use of smart technologies can help you maintain beautiful landscapes while maximizing efficiency – and that means significant reductions on your monthly water bill. These water-saving tips are useful whether you make the changes yourself or use a licensed irrigator:

Inspect your system monthly.

Irrigation systems need regular maintenance to work efficiently. Damage from lawn equipment or improper winterization can cause leaks and other serious problems. Run your system through all its zones and check for leaks, wet spots, water running from a single spot, geysers, and broken or clogged spray heads. You should clean clogged screens and microirrigation filters as needed.

Adjust sprinkler heads.

Is your driveway or sidewalk wet after every irrigation cycle? Do you have dry spots in your yard despite regular watering? You may have one or more sprinkler heads pointed in the wrong direction. Adjust sprinkler

head positions and spray patterns to avoid watering sidewalks or structures and to provide clearance over growing plants.

Check the pressure.

All sprinklers operate best at a water pressure that uniformly distributes the water. To provide system reliability and fire protection, water utilities also must maintain a minimum water pressure that may be higher than the irrigation system's ideal pressure. The Irrigation Association notes that, for every 5-point reduction in water pressure, you could decrease your water use by 6-8 percent. Reducing excessively high pressure also eliminates problems such as misting sprinklers and irrigation system damage. A licensed irrigator can reduce pressure by adding valves or replacing standard sprinkler heads with pressure-compensating heads.

Install a rain shutoff switch.

Inexpensive rain sensors prevent irrigation systems from running during and after rain showers, trimming irrigation by up to 35 percent and can extend the life of your system. In College Station, rain sensors are required on new systems, but they can be retrofitted on almost any system.

Know how much water your lawn needs.

Just how much water does your lawn really need, anyway? Thanks to the innovative new Brazos Valley Water Smart website (bvwatersmart.tamu.edu), you can now receive free weekly email alerts to help you know when to water and when to turn your irrigation controller off. Based on weather stations and rainfall data collected across Brazos County, the weekly recommendations are tailored specifically to your neighborhood and even provides information for each type of sprinkler head.

Sign up for a free irrigation checkup.

According to EPA's WaterSense, homes with automatic irrigation systems use about 50 percent more water outdoors than those without – even more if they have leaks, are programmed incorrectly, or have misdirected sprinkler heads. A free landscape irrigation checkup from College Station Water Services will show you how to check your system for broken or missing sprinkler heads and find leaks. We also provide suggested watering schedules.

Since 2010, more than 450 of our customers have used landscape irrigation checkups to better manage their irrigation system and conserve our limited groundwater resources. A checkup typically takes less than 45 minutes, and you get a written report and suggested irrigation schedule. While the inspectors won't make repairs or perform landscape maintenance, their reports can be handy if you need to call a licensed irrigator to fix the problem.

To schedule a free irrigation checkup, contact Jennifer Nations at 979-764-6223 or jnations@cstx.gov

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For more water conservation tips and available rebates, visit: CSTX.GOV/WATER



Homebuyer Education Course

Each Monday in August. Register today! To put it in baseball terms, buying a house is the World Series of purchases, and getting educated about the process before embarking on the journey can save you time, money — and heartache. If you are thinking about becoming a homeowner, the Homebuyer Education Course will equip you with the knowledge you need to make wise and informed decisions.

This four-day course will be held Monday, Aug. 1, 8, 15 and 22 from 6-7:30 p.m. at College Station Fire Station No. 6, located on the corner of University Drive and Tarrow Street. The course is free, but it's \$20 if you'd like to purchase the course book. Be sure to attend all four unique sessions to obtain a certificate.

Register today at cstx.gov/homebuyer or call 979.764.3778.

Surge Protection 101

Protection now can save money later. Power outages can cause a lot of inconveniences and problems, particularly for expensive electronic devices that lack adequate surge protection. Home theaters, TVs, computers and sound systems are costly to replace. What's the best way to protect these devices? Here are five things to consider:

Power strips aren't enough: Strips with multiple outlets are simply an extension of your wall outlet and may not provide adequate protection. High-quality surge protectors are a relatively inexpensive way to protect your electronics.

Joules matter: Protectors with at least of 400 joules of capacity are recommended. Whenever surge protection is used, it consumes capacity. Indicator lights may show that some capacity remains, but they don't reveal how much. Think of a battery that lacks the power to start your car but will play the radio.

Surge protectors wear out: The capacity of surge protectors degrades over time. They typically have a light that signals when they're on and working, but the light

doesn't indicate the unit's remaining useful life. How long they last depends on how much they're needed.

More outlets: Always get more surge protection outlets than you need.

What's new?: TheWirecutter's pick as the best surge protector is the Tripp Lite TLP1008TEL, which stops passing power when it's no longer effective at blocking surges.

When you consider the high price of your electronic devices, making sure you meet your surge protection needs is an easy choice to make.

Code Enforcement Reminder

Open storage ordinance. The latest trend is to turn front yards and carports into outdoor living rooms complete with big-screen TVs, sectional couches, and coffee tables.

Unfortunately, that's a violation of the city's open storage ordinance:

"Storage of commodities and material for sale, lease, inventory or private use shall not be permitted in residential areas ... such material shall be screened by a solid fence and shall not be visible from a public right-of-way. Commodities are defined as, but not limited to appliances, automotive parts, building materials, furniture."

In other words, that new outdoor living room should be behind your house, screened or otherwise out of the public view. Meanwhile, lawn art, like statues, is acceptable because it's not considered open storage.

Remember: if it's meant to be used and enjoyed indoors, then it can't be placed outside for everyone else to see — even if you do think it's a cool idea to have an outdoor living room in your front yard.

For questions about this ordinance or to report possible violations, call 979.764.6363, email CommunityEnhancement@cstx.gov or visit cstx.gov/CodeEnforcement.

events

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Aug. 1 - Registration opens
cstx.gov/youth, 979.764.3486

FREE MOVIES IN THE PARK

Aug. 12 - "Jurassic World"
Gates open at 7:30 p.m. Movie at 8:30.
Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater
cstx.gov/movies, 979.764.3486

EXPLORING HISTORY LUNCHEONS

Aug. 17 - "The Fightin' Texas Aggie Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor"
Sept. 21 - "Panel Discussion: Women at Texas A&M"
11:30 a.m. \$7 per person.
Aldersgate United Methodist Church
RSVP to: mrodgers@cstx.gov

CASINO DAY & LUNCHEON (ages 55+)

Aug. 24 | 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Southwood Community Center
RSVP to: mrodgers@cstx.gov

athletics

cstx.gov/sports • 979.764.3486

SOFTBALL, KICKBALL & VOLLEYBALL

Registration ends: Aug. 19. Ages 16+.

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

Registration ends: Aug. 19. Ages 8-14.

NFL FLAG FOOTBALL

Registration ends: Aug. 19. Ages 6-12.

START SMART FOOTBALL

Registration ends: Sept. 16. Ages 3-6.

elections

cstx.gov/elections • 979.764.3541
Mayor and Place 2 are up for election.

JULY 25-AUG. 22 - Filing period

OCT. 11 - Last day to register to vote

OCT. 24-NOV. 4 - Early Voting

NOV. 8 - Election Day