

Do You Sprinkle in the Rain?

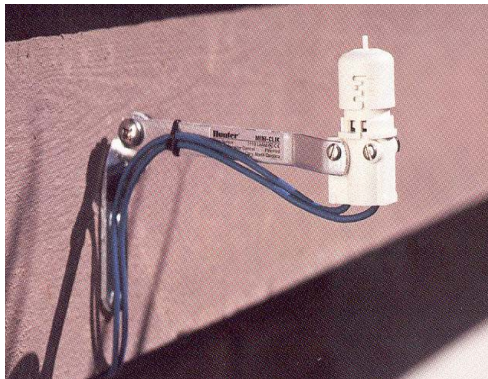
We occasionally hear a once-popular song “Singing in the Rain” but *sprinkling* in the rain is more reason to cry than to sing.

Here’s why. Automatic lawn sprinkler systems are controlled by an irrigation “time clock” that faithfully turns the sprinklers on and off like a well trained soldier according to orders given. This is all time-based information – day of the week, turn on at a certain time and off so many minutes later, etc. Unfortunately, the standard timer has no way of knowing if the lawn really needs water, if it’s raining, or if the season has changed to winter when less water is needed. It turns on the sprinklers regardless of real world conditions. There is a better way.



Lawn irrigation systems use about half the water supplied to a typical single family home. It is the home’s largest and most overlooked appliance. Over watered lawns are prone to have more disease and insects, contribute to fertilizer and lawn chemical pollution, are higher maintenance plus result in higher water bills and resource waste.

There is no silver bullet or single quick fix to make your system well managed and efficient.



Rain Sensor Irrigation Shut off Switch

There is a lot that can be done to bring an irrigation system up to par and much can be done at little cost if you’re willing to get involved. **A good first step to reduce water waste now is to install a rain sensor switch to automatically turn the irrigation off when it’s raining.** Independent university research has shown a 31% drop in irrigation water use if a rain sensor is used. Do-it-yourselfers can install one for about \$30 or irrigation contractors will do the job for around \$100 or so. No permit is needed. It will pay for itself after just a few skipped irrigation events when its raining plus your lawn will be healthier and will thank you for it. Having a functional rain sensor switch on automatic irrigation systems has also been a Florida law since 1991.

To learn more about rain sensors, other water saving opportunities and free workshops visit webpage: <http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu/water.htm>, contact the Manatee County Extension Service, (941) 722-4524, or email: jtichenor@ifas.ufl.edu.

Manatee County Extension Service fact sheet written August 1, 2007 by Jack Tichenor, Extension Agent, Manatee County Extension Service, 1303 17th Street W, Palmetto, FL 34221