

THE ISSUES WITH DRIP IRRIGATION

- A survey of landscape professionals and homeowners had "drip irrigation" as the highest maintenance of irrigation systems; it requires constant monitoring.
- Most maintenance people are not familiar with drip system repair, maintenance or even simple scheduling – there are too many different systems.
- And less familiar are home-owners.
- For most efficient use, systems require pressure regulation (usually pressure reduction); a bit of information rarely shared at purchase.
- Often shoddy products. (There are quality products available but that's not usually what people are looking for with "drip" systems – usually people are seeking a cheaper irrigation solution).
- Products are constantly being introduced, often disappearing after a few months; hence, failed products become hard to replace or impossible to find or repair.
- Small tubing often becomes clogged from hard water and although new designs include filters and self-flushing emitters, they are costly.
- The tubing/system is unsightly.
- And because it's unsightly, tubing is often covered by mulch or plant foliage, making it difficult to monitor the effectiveness of the system. Most gardeners, amateur and professional, often aren't aware of a clog in the system or other maintenance issue until the affected plants begin to show signs of stress.
- Easy prey for wayward mowers and other garden tools.
- Easy prey for kids and pets.
- Easy prey for rodents.
- Easy prey for vandalism.
- Provides no cooling effect for plants during hot spells.

- Does not wash off foliage as do sprinklers. Yes, it's a good thing to occasionally wash off your plants and it does not cause diseases nor "burn" the leaves.
- It's not easy to water areas with quantities of small plants, such as in newly-planted groundcovers and bedding flowers.
- Because the system is black and above ground and because water remains in the main line, micro-irrigation often applies damaging hot water to young plants.
- The vast majority of our weeds in Mediterranean climates are cool-season weeds -- the kind that come up with winter rains. Even with a drip system, we still get cool-season weeds.
- Salts build up at perimeter of wetted area; such minerals aggravate most root-rot organisms.
- It's often necessary to run it long to provide "deep" watering and consequently creates a long-term low-oxygen environment.
- Does not push oxygen into the soil.
- Because the wetted area is much smaller when delivered by drip compared to sprinklers, control is more critical in application of water to avoid plant stress.
- A recent evaluation of landscape drip irrigation systems revealed an average uniformity of less than 20% (> 70% is acceptable efficiency).
- One peculiar disadvantage to drip systems: gardeners often replace plants that have died at the end of a drip system tube by placing a new plant in the exact same place as the existing tube end – regardless of the type, needs, or eventual size of the new plant.

THE WORST ISSUE:

- *Drip systems do not promote an extensive root system, one that is deep and wide and not shallow-rooted -- the very type of system that allows a plant to be truly drought-resistant in the long run.*