



Green Gazette

Benefits of Micro-Irrigation

by Charles Burnett

Micro-irrigation (also called drip irrigation) can save you water and help you have healthier plants with less weeding. That is because it works differently than conventional overhead sprinklers.

Drip irrigation starts with a low pressure water supply that slowly flows through a network of pipes and tubes to reach every part of the yard/garden. Along the path, emitter devices deliver specific amounts of water at the base of every plant. The slow trickle allows *water to absorb at a rate effective for both the soil and the plant.* ***The Right amount of water, for the Right Plant, in the Right Place.***

A University of Florida Extension report said, “Drip irrigation reduces water usage because it brings water to the plant root zone ... (and) doesn’t wet the row middles or crop foliage... also (reducing) weed and disease problems.”*

The drip method is appropriate for groundcovers, flowers, shrubs, and trees in yards, gardens, farms, greenhouses, and patios. It fits next to sidewalks, streets, or buildings, in narrow or broad spaces. It is not appropriate for large turf areas, like golf courses, that use broadcast sprinklers.

Some simple rules might help avoid problems. First, do not make your system too complicated. You are better off to make more, shorter networks with fewer drippers. Also, check your network regularly. Emitters and filters get clogged, among other problems. Periodically, remove the plug at the end of your line and flush the line. To paraphrase a saying, “the best irrigation system depends upon the gardener’s shadow.”

*Eric Simonne, et al; “Drip-Irrigation Systems for Small Conventional Vegetable Farms and Organic Vegetable Farms”; (Publication #HS1144); <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/hs388>

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