

## MOTHER NATURE IS HELPING THE WATER SITUATION

by Randy Zellers of Service Direct Landscape

The Phoenix area has had a significant amount of rain in the first quarter of the year to help ease the pressure on our irrigation systems. Take full advantage by turning your irrigation controllers off for a period when rainfall is forecasted. During the winter months, temperatures are cooler, and the ET is lower, so plants and turf are not drying out as quickly. Here are some tips to save on your water bills during the winter months.

### TURF

If you have not overseeded your turf, water once per week to keep the components of your system pliable. Run the system for a short period of time, just enough to visually check all heads and nozzles are properly functioning. If you did overseed your turf this past fall, water three days per week and monitor the moisture in the soil. If you notice footprints in your turf areas after walking across your yard, it is a sign the turf could use a drink.

After a rainfall, shut the irrigation system off. Here are some guidelines based on inches of rain:

.25" – shut off for three to five days

.50" – shut off for one week to 10 days

.75" – shut off for 10 days to two weeks

Again, this is a general rule and each landscape is different based on exposures and types of plants, but it will help to lessen the burden the water crisis Phoenix is facing.

### SHRUBS

Most shrubs are in a period of dormancy through our winters in the desert. No need to trim aggressively or over water when they are not actively growing. Desert adapted shrubs can get by with watering once to twice per week this time of year. If you have drip irrigation, run your stations half an hour to one hour each watering. Always err on the minimal side during this time of year as our rainfall is helping to flush salts through the root zones of your plants. Leave your irrigation systems off for the same period of time as mentioned above.

### TREES

Most desert adapted trees can get by with minimal water through March. Species like Palo Verde, Mesquite and Ironwood will get enough moisture from our rainfall during the winter months. The time to start up water to trees is when temperatures stabilize at 65 degrees overnight and daytime temperatures reach mid- 80's. Water deeply and infrequently for desert adapted trees to flush salts through the root zone and allow nutrients to benefit the tree.

Let's all take advantage of this gift while we can. Before you know it, the temperatures will be back nearing one hundred degrees and water will need to be applied more aggressively to your landscape.