



Jargon for irrigation parts such as “spaghetti line,” “soaker hose,” “spot-spitters,” “shrubblers,” “emitters,” “laser-line,” and “drip-staples” have a mystique all their own – despite their simplistic function. It is a wonder why this is not called “irritation” instead of “irrigation.” Although, the right information and parts acquired from a helpful irrigation store can simplify the installation immensely.

In all irrigation applications, there are two fundamental principals: frequency (the amount of time between water applications) and duration (the amount of time the water is applied at each interval). Frequency is best determined by close observation as to when the upper several inches of soil

method, will work wonders to service your floriferous containers. Be sure that the connection is not downstream of your water softener; this may prove challenging and a call to a plumber can greatly expedite the process. Detrimentially, the soluble salts used to soften water can create a negative osmotic reaction with your prized plant materials and create a “burn” as water exits your plants’ roots, instead of entering. Additionally, the installation of an in-line filter and pressure-reducer downstream of the automatic control valve shall save you from headaches, dead plants, and expense. Fine-mesh filters are critical as they clean out clogging particles and a pressure-reducer downstream of the automatic control valve.

Run a 5/8-inch drip hose either to your new planted bed area or behind containers (as hidden as possible). Then run 1/4-inch spaghetti lines from the 5/8-inch pipe directly to the roots. The spaghetti-end hoses disperse water effectively through adaptable shrubblers, spot-spitters, and soaker hoses. Drip staples are handy to anchor the spaghetti line in to the pot to stay put.

When connecting an existing irrigation system to recently added landscape plants, use a 1/4-inch spaghetti line extension cut to the exact length from the drip hose to the plant, putting the water right at the root ball, and add a two-gallon per hour emitter. If the irrigation system was installed by a licensed landscape contractor, you may want to contact them as to how many new additions can be added to the system without overloading.

If all of this irrigation jargon still remains alien and awkward, hiring a licensed landscape contractor prior to leaving for a much deserved vacation may be well worth the investment. Returning to a thriving colorful garden with all your vivacious plants is the best welcome to home sweet home.

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VACATION IRRIGATION

It’s that time of year again to pack up the suitcases, load up the car, or book the flight to some restful vacation destination for a much needed battery recharge. We must not entirely forget our domestic duties, though; pets need to be cared for, mail and newspaper claimed. Of equal importance is the health and vivaciousness of our landscape investment. Unless you are lucky enough to have a trusted friend possessing a willing green thumb to water your plants while you are away, an automatic irrigation system is a must. All the plants you currently hand-water, such as those in patio containers and any recent landscape additions not hooked up to the existing automatic irrigation drip system can easily be connected to the aqueous umbilical cord of life. Without extensive irrigation experience, however, the first venture down to the local landscape supply store can seem alien and awkward at best.

or substrate dry completely. Containers vary widely in their material porosity (see March issue: *Containing One’s Garden*), color and size; when you factor these variables in with different sun and wind exposures, you’ll find that separate pots require entirely different watering frequencies.

As for duration, water just long enough to saturate the entire substrate and leach 10-15 percent total container volume to flush excessive soluble salts. Due to the sponge-like water-holding properties of most soils, watering your landscape plants will require far less frequency and less duration than potted plants. A soil probe is the best tool to inspect the water column when calibrating the automatic control clock for both frequency and duration in your landscape.

A hose-bib battery-operated automatic control valve, the fastest and easiest automating