



**MATA - TURF, INC.**

Selling Customer Satisfaction

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**Texas Grown and Proud  
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**Maintaining  
Your  
Sprinkler  
Irrigation  
System**

**Sprinkler Systems - Care Sheets**



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## SPRINKLER CARE

Congratulations! Now that you have a fully automatic sprinkler system, you don't have to worry about watering your yard again! Well, that's almost 100% true. The fact is your sprinkler system functions mechanically just as your car does and will require some basic maintenance every now and then to ensure proper operation. We have comprised the following list of things to know for all Mata-Turf, Inc. sprinkler system owners, which will aid in troubleshooting any potential problems you may encounter.

### SPRINKLER TAP

The sprinkler tap is where your sprinkler system attaches to the main water supply. There are two types of taps available, inside taps and outside taps.

**INSIDE TAPS** — an inside tap is typically the easiest and most economical to install. It is usually located in the basement or crawl space of a home. It consists of a shut-off valve and bleeder screw, which will aid in draining your system in the winter. It is important that the bleeder screw contains a rubber gasket inside to provide a proper seal. The bleeder screw should only be tightened by hand.

**OUTSIDE TAPS** — an outside tap will be out in the yard between the home and where the main water comes in off of the street supply. The shut-off valve is called a *stop and waste* and is approximately 6' deep inside a sleeved pipe. Turning on and shutting off the system requires only a half turn of the valve with a long 6 to 8 foot *key*. A flashlight will help align the key onto the stop and waste valve properly. It is important to turn on or shut off the valve the complete turn to prevent leakage of water through the *waste* or drain hole in the valve. This drain will aid in draining your system for the winter.

### BACKFLOW PREVENTION DEVICE

The backflow prevention device is the large, usually exposed copper pipe and brass *bell* with various shut-off valves. This device is required by law to be installed on all cross connections where a sprinkler system will come in contact with potable drinking water (your main water supply line). This valve will prevent any potential contaminants, such as pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers from being back siphoned into your drinking water supply. If you should ever see water continually draining or pouring out of his valve, close both shut-off valves on the unit and contact Mata-Turf, Inc. for proper servicing.

Since this device is the only part of your sprinkler system which contains water and is out of the ground exposed to the elements it does present a need to be protected in the early spring or fall should temperatures drop below freezing at night. The best way to do this is to wrap all of



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the exposed parts, including the copper pipes, with fiberglass insulation and then covering everything with plastic (a large garbage bag works well) and taping with duct tape to ensure that it all stays in place. In the fall, following winterization of the system, it is important to make sure that all of the handles and petcocks are cocked at 45 degrees and kept that way until spring. This will prevent any possible freeze damage to the ball valves.

## SPRINKLER CLOCK

The sprinkler clocks that we use are what we believe to be the best commercial grade clocks available to our clients; we have them in our own homes!

Your Foreman that installed your system will show you how to operate the controller. Should you need further assistance, please refer to your owner's manual or feel free to contact Mata-Turf Inc.

It is important to replace the battery in the controller at the beginning of every season. The battery is backup so that your controller will not lose its program during any power failures that may occur. The clock needs to have a properly charged battery installed to be able to be programmed. Please note if your clock requires a rechargeable (NICAD) or regular battery. Should you encounter any nearby lightning strikes, check your controller's panel following the storm. A flashing LED panel indicates that the clock has lost its program due to a surge through the ground. The clock will need to be re-programmed.

Remember — your clock always needs to be in the automatic or run mode, not manual, in order to run automatically.

## ELECTRIC SOLENOID VALVES

The valves, which are located inside the green valve boxes buried throughout the yard, are responsible for sending the water to each separate zone after receiving the signal from the controller. Should you notice one zone not watering, contact Mata-Turf, Inc. so we can check the electrical continuity to the valve. If a zone waters continually without shutting off, this is called a *stuck valve*. Shut off the water to the whole system outside at the Backflow Prevention Device by closing one valve and call Mata-Turf, Inc. for service.

## SPRINKLER HEADS

Sometimes sand has a way of creating problems for sprinkler heads by clogging nozzles and reducing the effectiveness of their spray. Should this happen, unscrewing the nozzle and cleaning out the orifice with a fine wire usually works. Remember to always make sure the plastic filter screen is in place in the neck of the head before reinstalling the nozzle. If a sprinkler head does not return to its case and sticks in the *up* position, unscrew the top portion of the head only (leaving the case in the ground) and remove the internal assembly- remove any debris. Upon replacing the internal assembly into the case, make sure that any grooves that



may be internal line back up with the appropriate guides on the case. Each spray head has an adjustment screw on the top of the nozzle, which can give a *custom* spray by either opening or closing down the spray screw. It is important to know that spray and rotor heads in sod areas should always reach at least head to head to provide proper coverage.

## PROGRAMMING TIPS

A properly functioning sprinkler system is only as good as its design and the program it runs on. Some basic programming tips are as follows:

- ❖ Shrub and flowerbeds require less water than sod.
- ❖ Watering should be done between sunset and sunrise to avoid water losses due to evaporation (heat of the day) and wind.
- ❖ Program your sprinkler to start when household water use will be at a minimum, i.e.: showers, dish washing and clothes washing. This will enable the sprinkler system to operate efficiently using the maximum amount of water for which it was designed.
- ❖ Your sod and plants will require less water in the spring and fall than during the heat of the summer. Seasonally adjusting your watering amounts will conserve water and save you money on your water bill.
- ❖ Your sprinkler system was designed with Northern and Southern exposures taken into consideration. The South facing exposures will require more water than the North, this applies to sod as well as plant beds. Adjusting the times accordingly will also conserve water and save you money as well as maintaining healthier plant material.
- ❖ Write down your program that you like to use and keep on record with the controller.

## AUTOMATIC IRRIGATION SYSTEM

Your new underground irrigation system should provide you with many years of trouble-free operation providing these simple maintenance procedures are followed:

### SPRING START-UP PROCEDURES

- Close all drain valves located at each grouping of control valves.
- Close the petcocks on the vacuum breaker. This is the piece of equipment that appears above ground.
- Close the drain located in the pit where the waterline was *tapped*.
- Open the supply valve very slowly. This valve is also located in the pit where the tap was made.
- Open the ball valves on the vacuum breaker to energize the mainline. These should be opened slowly.



- If your controller is equipped with a battery, replace it. Set the time, day and date. Program each station's time according to the averages listed in the last item under General Notes on the following page.
- Run through the entire system to assure proper working conditions and to check for leaks.

## WEEKLY MAINTENANCE

- ❖ Inspect heads and nozzles for proper coverage and working conditions.
- ❖ Clean any dirt nozzles or filter screens.
- ❖ Inspect components for damage due to lawn maintenance procedures.

## MONTHLY MAINTENANCE:

- ❖ Perform all weekly procedures.
- ❖ Adjust times on controller to compensate for different temperatures and precipitation each month.
- ❖ Run through the controller to assure proper working condition.

## YEARLY MAINTENANCE

- ❖ Perform all monthly procedures.
- ❖ Inspect all components (heads, valves, etc) to assure proper working condition.
- ❖ Adjust heights of heads to accommodate fluctuations in turf height.
- ❖ *Start-Up* and *Winterize* system (see detailed explanations).

## WINTERIZATION PROCEDURE

- ❖ Close the main supply.
- ❖ Connect the air compressor to the service tee located on the vacuum breaker.
- ❖ Turn the controller to the station #1 and start compressor.
- ❖ Force air through station #1 until the water has been blown out. Continue the process through stations #2, #3, etc. until all stations have been blown out completely.
- ❖ Open all drain valves and petcocks on the vacuum breaker.
- ❖ Turn off the controller but allow it to run so that lubricants stay on clock motors.
- ❖ While your system can be drained without blowing it out, we recommend blowing it out with compressed air in order to remove all water and to relieve the stress that ice causes in our harsh climate.



## GENERAL NOTES

- ❖ It is important to repair any malfunctioning equipment as soon as possible, especially during the hot mid-Summer months.
- ❖ Check for spots that appear to be dry. The sooner these are corrected, the less damage there will be.
- ❖ Spray heads apply more water than rotary heads in the same amount of time. Therefore, these stations will need to run for a shorter period of time.
- ❖ Average station times are as follows:
  - Drip zones: 45-60 minutes
  - Spray zones: 20-30 minutes
  - Rotary zones: 30-45 minutes

These times are only averages and will vary depending on the time of season, plant material type, wind and soil conditions.