

YOUR GARDEN

Prepping Sprinkler Systems For Cold Weather

(NAPSA)—Colder weather can damage irrigation and sprinkler systems. That's why experts advise homeowners to prepare their sprinkler systems to withstand harsh freezing temperatures.

Fortunately, getting your sprinklers ready to face the cold can be simple. Here are some tips that can help prevent costly damage to irrigation systems:

- **Stay In Control**—If you have an automatic system, then you will need to “shut down” the controller (timer). Most controllers have a “rain or off-mode” that simply shuts off the signals to the valves. The controller continues to keep time, the programming information (start times, valve run times, etc.) isn't lost and the clock continues to run. The only change is that the valves will not activate. An alternative to using that mode is to simply shut off the power to the controller. If you do, you'll need to reprogram the time and potentially all the other settings when the weather warms up.

- **Insulate Your Assets**—Shut off the water supply to the irrigation system and protect the main shutoff valve for your irrigation system against freezing. Make sure it is wrapped with insulation (foam insulation tape and a plastic bag). If you do not have a main shutoff valve, install one and consider it a preventative investment. Any aboveground piping needs to be insulated as well. Self-sticking foam-insulating tape or foam insulating tubes com-



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monly found at home supply stores work well.

- **Drain The Pipes**—People in very cold areas should remove the water from the pipes and sprinklers so that it won't freeze and cause the pipes to burst. There are several ways to drain pipes: manual drain valves, automatic drain valves or the compressed air blowout method. Since there could be potential safety risks, contacting an irrigation specialist is recommended.

- **Protect Backflow Preventers**—Insulate backflow preventers and valves if they are above ground. You can also use insulation tape for this. Do not block the air vents and drain outlets on backflow preventers.

Consult an irrigation specialist such as those at Rain Bird before you attempt to winterize your system.

For more irrigation tips or information visit www.rainbird.com or call 1-800-RAINBIRD.