

Your Lawn

Protecting Your Sprinkler System On Colder Days

(NAPSA)—While it may be time to head indoors for the colder months, there's still one more gardening task you may want to take care of.

To ensure a healthy lawn and garden in the spring, take a few simple steps to ensure that your sprinkler system is ready to withstand the colder months.

If they are not properly protected, inground irrigation systems can be damaged by harsh winter weather. Protecting them is easy enough. Here are a few tips to help:

- **Turn off your timer.** Automatic systems have a controller or timer. Most controllers have a "rain" or "off" mode that 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.

You can also shut off the power to the controller, but if you do, you'll need to reprogram the time and potentially all the other settings when the weather warms up.

- **Shut off the water.** You can protect the main shutoff valve against freezing by shutting off the water supply. Make sure the valve is wrapped with insulation (foam insulation tape and a plastic bag). If your system doesn't have a main shutoff valve, install one to protect your investment.

Aboveground piping also needs to be insulated and you can use self-sticking, foam-insulating tape or foam-insulating tubes found at home supply stores.



A lush green lawn in the spring may be easier to achieve if you protect your sprinkler system during the colder months.

- **Keep the pipes from freezing.** If you live in a very cold area, consider removing the water from the pipes and sprinklers so the pipes don't freeze and burst. There are several ways to drain pipes: manual drain valves, automatic drain valves or the compressed air blowout method. But proceed cautiously. Since there could be potential safety risks, contacting an irrigation specialist is a good idea.

- **Insulate backflow preventers and valves if they are aboveground.** You can also use insulation tape for this, but be careful not to block the air vents and drain outlets on backflow preventers.

Before winterizing your system, you may want to consult an irrigation specialist, such as those at Rain Bird.

- **Learn more.** For more irrigation tips as well as information on where to find a specialist to help you winterize your system, visit www.rainbird.com or call (800) RAINBIRD.