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## Start Planning for Summer Annuals!

By Bill Jernigan, ACLP

Believe it or not, now is the time to begin planning for summer flowers. Spring weather is still upon us and the winter annuals are at their flowering peak. However, it is important to get a head start on installing your summer flowers before the heat of summer arrives. Too often, people wait until the winter annuals have declined before planting the new flowers which results in increased stress on the newly planted flowers.

Sometime towards the end of April or into early May you should remove winter annuals, it is important to loosen the soil in the beds and add planting soil if needed as well as a well balanced granular fertilizer. Choose a fertilizer that contains both nitrogen and a high amount of phosphorus. This will help promote a healthy root system on the new plants which will help them endure the summer heat.

Install the flowers in the soil ensuring that the roots are completely covered by soil and that the soil



## MONTHLY LANDSCAPE CHECKLIST

### Plant Renovation List (Common Type Plants)

- √ Acacia Redolens
- √ Cape Honeysuckle
- √ Cassia
- √ Rosemary
- √ Valentine Bush

General Irrigation Setting (Actual times will vary depending on the precipitation rate of your system)

- √ Rye Grass Turf irrigated using typical pop-up sprinklers: 8 – 10 minutes three times per week.

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around the roots is in good contact. Because newly planted flowers can dry quickly, irrigate immediately after you have finished the installation. This will also dissolve the fertilizer that was added to the soil and make it available to the plants.

To promote continual health and flowering, be sure to fertilize monthly with either a granular or foliar fertilizer. Certain flowers also respond to “deadheading” where spent blooms are removed from the plant. This will encourage continual blooming. Some great choices for summer annuals include Lantana, Vinca, Katie Ruellia, Zinnia, Pentas, Canna, Celosia and Coreopsis.



*Pentas are a very hardy and colorful choice of summer annual.*

Consult with your local nursery to make sure that you use the correct flower for your situation. These flowers come in a variety of colors and with proper care can provide beautiful color through the summer.

- √ Dormant Bermuda Turf: Begin to water twice per week for 8 – 10 minutes.
- √ Drip irrigation for Plants: 10 – 14 minutes twice per week.
- √ Drip irrigation for Trees: 12 – 22 minutes twice per week.

Please remember that these are general recommendations and depending on your system you may need to adjust watering times up or down. Also, if we do receive rain then irrigation can be suspended to account for the amount of rain.

## HOW SMART IS YOUR IRRIGATION?

By Jim Trog, CIA, CIC



Did you know that nearly 70% of water used in most households is used outside the home? Great advances have been made inside the home in an effort to conserve water. Low flush toilets, aerators on faucets, more efficient washing machines and dishwashers have become the norm and are all devices that we don't give a second thought. Yet the area of our homes that consume the most

water has gone largely ignored when it has come to conservation. Until now, the focus has been to rethink types of plants that are used in the landscape. The thought being this would reduce water consumption by utilizing plant material with low water use requirements. This is sound thinking, but without reducing how much water that is actually applied to these plants, we aren't achieving the full benefit that was hoped for.

In recent years, advances have been made to "smart"

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## ISA Palm Tree Trimming Specifications

By Gary McCunn, Certified Arborist WE-7255A



We prune palms for the same reasons we prune other trees. That is, mostly for the needs of people, rather than for the needs of the tree. That does not mean there is anything wrong with pruning, but it is important to keep in mind that pruning is a stress to the tree, and it should be conducted with specific objectives in mind.

The hurricane cut removes all the fronds, alive and dead, up to a 45-degree angle which I do not approve of. The loss of live foliage, whether on a palm or a pine, can have dire consequences and should not be undertaken without a clear understanding of the potential risks and benefits.



**Examples of a Hurricane Cut**

Removing live foliage can starve a tree, reducing its photosynthetic capacity to support critical functions such as growth, storage, and defense. Excessive pruning can become a contributing factor in the decline and eventual death of any tree. Removing too much live foliage during a season can

significantly reduce trunk expansion during that same time period. Hurricane cuts can remove so much foliage that the trunk becomes constricted and a potential weak point.

Trees that have been severely pruned for a time and then left to grow have an hourglass figure; this constriction can snap off in high winds. Appearance trimming is to never exceed a 180 degree angle; to reduce habitat for unwanted insects, rodents, and birds (and even snakes!); and for safety. The dead leaves can become a safety hazard when they fall great distances. The Canary Island date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*) has large, heavy petioles armed with long, sharp, modified leaves, or spikes that can cause serious injury if they strike a person when the leaf falls.

*We never suggest trimming any fronds above 180 degrees other than if there are some that have been damaged. Trimming should be completed in June to July after the flowers and fruit has sprouted from the crown so that they can be removed at the same time.*



**Proper Pruning completed per ISA Specifications**

## HOW SMART IS YOUR IRRIGATION? CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

irrigation controllers that are helping to rein in water usage outdoors. These devices generally utilize an environmental input to make automatic adjustments to irrigation control systems. The benefit being that once set up, the controller no longer requires those seasonal changes by the end user – saving both time and water while producing a beautiful landscape that is properly irrigated. In fact, most use “real time” data to make daily adjustments that are dependent on current weather patterns. As with many technologies, as development is continually refined, they have become less expensive and more user friendly, putting them in reach of the average homeowner.

These devices have a broad range of capabilities. A simple “smart” device would be a rain switch.



This sensor type device connects to an existing irrigation controller, either wired or wireless, and acts to block the controller from running irrigation when a preset volume of rain is received. This low cost apparatus is easy to install especially when using the wireless model. The sensor can be installed where it will have the best opportunity to catch rainfall and the receiver unit is installed next to the controller to which it is wired.

Soil moisture sensors have also been adapted for the same use. They are installed in a representative area of the landscape and function as a switch.



When enough moisture is present in the soil, the sensor blocks the irrigation controller where it is

connected from running. When the soil is dry, then the controller can run its preprogrammed schedules. Newer sensor models are easy to install as they don't require trenching to install wiring back to the irrigation controller. These units can utilize the existing wiring from the remote electric irrigation valve to send signals back to the controller. Then there is what we refer to in the industry as “weather based” irrigation controllers.



These receive an external input, either from a sensor or a radio signal, and make adjustments to current irrigation programming. Most controllers of this type take into account the relationship between soil, water and plant material to automatically schedule the proper run time and frequency of watering for each zone. The most common controllers require a low cost annual subscription to receive the radio input that tells the controller what the daily water loss is from the soil (Evaporation) and the plants (Transpiration) or Evapotranspiration (ET). Programming for these controllers requires a good understanding of the irrigation system and landscape that is being irrigated. Professional assistance during the installation and set up is recommended. When installed and set up correctly, these controllers are as close to “set it and forget it” as it comes.

Remember, no matter how sophisticated the irrigation control equipment may be, there is no substitute for a good sprinkler evaluation. Check and repair broken or misaligned sprinklers, clean clogged nozzles and emitters and check the system for leaks. The “smartest” irrigation controller will not overcome a poorly maintained system.

For more information on “smart” controllers, check out [www.irrigation.org/smartwater/](http://www.irrigation.org/smartwater/)