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ADVANTAGES OF DRIP OR IN-LINE IRRIGATION
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Even though we experienced an exceptionally rainy winter, water conservation should always be practiced and if not done already, it may be time for gardeners to convert to drip or in-line irrigation in their gardens. Either system is generally less expensive to install than conventional subsurface PVC irrigation, uses much less water and is much more efficient in watering landscapes.

One caveat, however . . . for those who still have lawns, a drip irrigation system is not the method to use to water the turf, so overhead sprinklers will still be needed. In-line systems are admittedly more difficult to install in already established lawns and if used, should be in place before installing sod or grass seed. It also is a bit more difficult to maintain, but there are commercial installers who specialize in this type of irrigation and research in locating a reputable one is necessary.

For those without lawns, here are some points to consider:

<http://blog.irrigationdirect.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/dripper1.jpg> **Water Conservation:** Drip or in-line irrigation allows a more efficient means of watering because both supply water only where it is needed, the roots of plants. As a result, water is not wasted on leaves or soil, and significantly reduces the chance of evaporation and run off.

Reduced Weed Growth: When water is applied using a conventional sprinkler, everything gets wet. Since drip or in-line irrigation systems apply water directly to the root zone of plants, the spaces in between plants remain dry, which greatly inhibits weed seed germination.

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Reduced Plant Stress: When plants get deep, consistent watering, they thrive. Inefficient, shallow watering contributes to plant stress and during dry periods, sometimes leads to plant death because the roots are not deep enough to sustain the plant during periods of no water.

<http://blog.irrigationdirect.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/dripperline1.jpg> **Extremely Flexible Application:** Drip or in-line irrigation offers many options. From the tubing to drip fittings, emitters and micro-sprayers, drip products can create a versatile watering system which can easily be installed on hillsides or flat terrains. Drip systems can be added to containers, planters, raised beds, row crops, trees and shrubs. Drip systems can also be retrofitted onto existing sprinkler systems with little trouble.

In-line irrigation systems are those manufactured with all emitters already installed inside the tubing. No holes are necessary to be punched into the tubing to insert emitters and the tubing can be buried under mulch. It also does not clog and will last for years.

Saves Money: Once installed, drip or in-line irrigation systems will use much less water to irrigate a landscape. If on a well, the homeowner will notice a drop in pumping costs and hand watering will become a thing of the past. The system can be automated by installing an irrigation controller, so watering can be scheduled when needed.

California will always periodically suffer drought periods, so maybe now is the time to think about converting an old overhead watering system to drip or in-line irrigation.

The upcoming Public Education class presented by Master Gardeners will be “Designing with Perennials.” Sheri Burke will lead a tour of the Sherwood Demonstration Garden and share ideas on how to design with perennials. **FREE CLASS.** Saturday, May 20. 9am – noon, Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Drive, Placerville

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at [311 Fair Lane in Placerville](#). For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on Facebook.