

Irrigation overload

I am sorry if this is TMI but there are some pretty cool things happening in Wild Suburbia with regard to [irrigation](#). As always, I am making these changes to keep native and nonnative plants (especially trees) healthy, while using water efficiently. And I want to do this when we are home and away. We will be away again for much of the summer and so I need to be able to deeply water trees every 3 to 4 weeks. The vegetable garden needs watering every other day - plus or minus depending on weather. The lawn needs weekly watering, while mature ornamental shrubs should be deeply watered every couple of weeks. Complicated, indeed, especially since I want to be able to control this remotely. Though I will be basking in a cool, green locale, I want to be able to set off the water in So Cal in advance of a predicted heatwave, or cut back on watering frequency when the marine layer blesses us with higher humidity and lower temperatures.

Introducing the Skydrop controller

As described in the [previous blog post](#), we are now proud owners of two [Skydrop](#) smart controllers. I strongly suggest that any of you out there who have an older controller check to see whether you are eligible for a free upgrade through the [Metropolitan Water District Water Conservation Project](#).

In the [previous post](#), I provided a pretty skimpy description of the installation of the controller because an installer did it for me... lickety-split. Not to worry, though, you can see it done on Youtube. This [amazing video](#) shows installation, setup and programming:

Front yard

Back in 2002 we installed a typical, in-ground sprinkler system for the front yard with a Rain Bird controller. It had six valves that sent water to below-ground PVC pipes connected to rotor and spray popups. However, we were only using three of the six valves. With the new [Skydrop](#) controller in place I am now using four valves and plan to connect a fifth. These are the valves and emitters that can and will be used in the front yard:

1. Parkway (disconnected, parkway is no longer irrigated)
2. East lawn and deodar ([Hunter 2000 mp rotator nozzles](#) for lawn)
3. Vegetable garden ([retrofitted](#) to low-volume system with [Rain Bird Retrofit Kit](#), [video with installation instructions](#))
4. Mature shrubs and deodar on east side (popup spray heads, [Rain Bird 1800](#))
5. Chinese fringe tree and Ray Hartman ceanothus shrubs on SE side of house ([Netafim inline drip – 12 inch spacing/.9 gph](#) connected with [Rain Bird Retrofit Kit](#) to a previously unused zone)
6. Coffeeberry foundation plants (I plan to install low-volume spray to apply water to shrubs without spraying nearby house and walk)

Chinese fringe tree and Ray Hartman ceanothus

When we installed the irrigation system we connected the fifth valve to a pipe that went to a small garden at the SE corner of the front yard. We capped off the pipe but never connected it to a spray head. I decided to finally use this valve by placing a tee in the pipe so it would still go to the corner, but it would also be connected to an inline drip hose. The drip hose circles one Chinese fringe tree and two Ray Hartman ceanothus shrubs in a narrow bed along the sidewalk.

More irrigation to come

To summarize, we now have two smart controllers, one for the front yard and one for the back yard. In the front yard, we can water the large deodar tree, lawn, a Chinese fringe tree, and mature shrubs. The vegetable garden is on a low-volume system that will run frequently for a relatively short period of time.

The back yard controller will set off four valves that will send water through hoses to soaker hoses and inline drip for deep watering of citrus trees (zone 1), avocado 1 (zone 2), avocado 2 (zone 3), and three Chinese fringe trees along the NE sidewalk (zone 4).