

Garden Irrigation- some Questions and Answers

What does an irrigation system do?

Well ok that is pretty obvious- but actually it can be very variable. We can water as much or as little of your garden as you want. We can water lawns and planting, beds and pots, hanging baskets and trees. You can have a rainwater capture system to take water from your roof or that of an outbuilding (allowing you to water through a hosepipe ban), you can use it for pond top-ups, garden hoses and taps. It can be largely or fully automatic and can probably make the tea if we could work out how to ask it.



What does the kit look like?

Mostly but not completely invisible depending on the system. The basic network is pipes about the size of hose pipe which can usually be buried. We can run under hard surfaces



(although there can be time and cost to do that) and clip neatly to walls. The smaller feed pipes to pots and micro-sprinklers is about the diameter of a pencil. Pop ups do exactly that- they hide in the lawn and leap into action only as needed.

You will need a control box somewhere- this can be as simple as a small box on your tap, or for larger systems it will be a box the size of a small thin chest of drawers that is usually hidden in the planting. The tank, if needed, can be the

size of a wheelie bin for a small system without rainwater capture to the size of a car for a large one with it. These can be surface mounted if you have space to hide it with planting or hidden underground- we can advise which suits best.

What sort of system do I need?

We will advise based on what you need. As a rule watering just planting areas or pots with drippers can be done from a tap fed system, but pop-ups (for lawns) needs more pressure and usually requires a tank installation. Larger gardens almost always require a tank and pump. We are good at estimating which is required, but it is pretty much impossible to be certain that a tap system will do it until all the pipe-runs are in place and you try it- our



Chairman is a Physics rocket scientist type and maintains that... "*Its chaotic stuff water..*". We think it is best to work with this and be honest about the uncertainties than to give you a load of guff.

Will it make a mess to install?

We always make good any mess-but it can do. Turf trenching (to hide pipe-runs) is pretty neat but the turf takes a while to knit back afterwards, and if we have to lift slabs the new pointing can look a bit "new" for a while, otherwise it is usually low impact.

What maintenance will it require?

Again the chaos factor- although most systems are really robust and work well with almost no maintenance, there are some many small things that can interfere with it working properly that we do suggest you check it regularly - you can do this with a glass in your hand so don't think of it as an onerous task- pop the irrigation on and have a gentle wander of an evening- very therapeutic!

Problems can be as simple as leaves lying over the drippers, sprinklers rotating into the wrong direction, mower damage, or a dog chew or spade cut through a pipe. If you see water-logging anywhere or plants wilting it is worth checking there is nothing obvious wrong with the pipe-work. Don't leave it until all the plants have died to call us as we sadly can't be responsible for the planting if it fails to work.

Adjusting the system- drought versus waterlogging?

Ground conditions are notoriously variable even within a small area- a clay pan can sit next to free-draining sand and who knows what is under your soil-we have found builders rubble, underground obstacles, ice houses, soakaways, and streams. The water table can vary by year-particularly in smaller gardens in built up areas and you may have to adjust for this. Usually this is simple - you just adjust how long each zone is watered for. As a rule we will cover the first few months of fiddling as part of the service, and after that we just charge hourly as you need us.



What if it goes wrong? Is it likely to go wrong?

Given its chaotic nature, water systems often take a while to get working properly and we always work with yours over the first few weeks to get it sorted. We will also usually do the first winter close-down and Spring turn on as part of our service and will aim to call all irrigation clients at the relevant times of year to offer this (you can always call us if we have missed you).



Irrigation systems by their nature are pretty fragile- not in the expensive bits like the manifolds and tanks, but the pipe-work, micro tubing and drippers/sprinklers. Most of our clients have children, dogs or gardeners, all of whom have been known to wreck bits of protruding tubes so we can reasonably expect a small amount of maintenance to be required on every system annually.

Pumps have a relatively short life (2-3 years is good in our experience, although we tend now to buy more

expensive pumps than many companies to get them to last longer)

Winter frosts if very severe can damage even systems that have been drained down over winter- we lost several solenoid valves this last year.



If it goes wrong will you sort, it out and will you charge me for this?

Yes and yes. The good news is that you have not been abandoned- these systems often require a bit of maintenance, particularly in Spring and usually when there is a hot dry spell and you are desperate for it to work. We will aim to come out and fix it as quickly as possible- if you are a maintenance or current landscaping client, the team can often just sort it out during one of their visits or with a little extra time and a few fittings. If we need to send someone out specially we will charge at our normal project management hourly rate plus materials as needed (although we will check with you if it is anything more than a few pounds).



We will:

- Advise you on the best system for your garden based on lots of experience of different ones
- Help you to adjust this as needed for site conditions and how the system is working
- Work hard to get the work done promptly and effectively even if it takes a few visits!
- Offer you an annual winter close-down and spring switch-on (at our normal rates)
- Be on hand to help with emergencies (at normal rates)

We will not:

- Guarantee that a tap fed system will suit all sites- your water pressure may not be up to it even if it seems ok- some water systems vary by day and time of day or year
- Guarantee the kit against frost damage or wear and tear from mowers, dogs and enthusiastic spade work-although we will help you get it back up and running as cheaply as possible
- Promise it will be perfect in one go or tell you it is maintenance-free- it should be very low hassle and will definitely make a huge difference to your garden, but does need a tiny bit of t.l.c.!