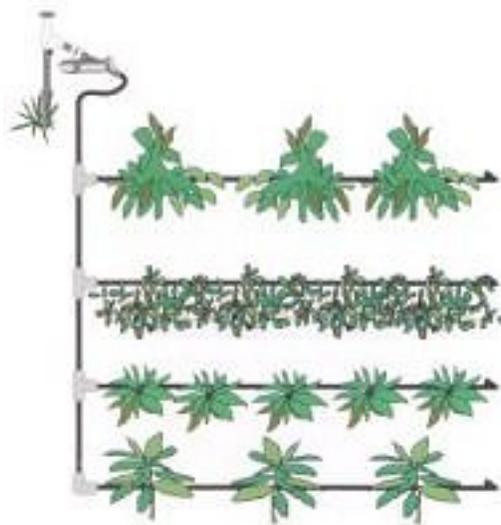


Drip Irrigation

Drip irrigation, also known as trickle irrigation or microirrigation, is an irrigation method which saves water and fertilizer by allowing water to drip slowly to the roots of plants, either onto the soil surface or directly onto the root zone, through a network of valves, pipes, tubing, and emitters.



a basic diagram of a simple drip system

The advantages of drip irrigation are:

- It saves water! Studies show that drip irrigation systems use 30 - 50% less water than conventional watering methods, such as sprinklers.
- Improves growth - Smaller amounts of water applied over a longer amount of time provide ideal growing conditions. Drip irrigation extends watering times for plants, and prevents soil erosion and nutrient runoff. Also, because the flow is continuous, water penetrates deeply into the soil to get well down into the root zone.
- Discourages weeds - Water is only delivered where it's needed.
- Saves time - Setting and moving sprinklers is not required. A timer can be added to the system for automatic watering.
- Helps control fungal diseases, which grow quickly under moist conditions. Also, wet foliage can spread disease.
- Adaptable - A drip irrigation system can be modified easily to adjust to the changing needs of a garden or lawn.

The very low flow of water from outlets on a drip system also enables you to water a much larger area from a single water source. Less water usage equals a larger single watering zone.

Another advantage of using a low flow drip system is that you do not need high pressure to supply the drippers and microsprinklers. Most drip systems are recommended to run at about 15 to 30 PSI (pounds per square inch). For comparison most houses have water pressure of anywhere from 40 PSI to 60 PSI. The benefit is that you do not have to worry about large pressure drops in your household water flow just because the irrigation system has turned on; for example you will not notice if the system goes on when you are in the shower! Because of this low pressure, drip systems can use tubing and other components that do not require glue, clamps or hard-to-connect components.



Drip irrigation supplies are commonly found in any garden supply store, and can also be ordered online.