

Considerations for BMPs for lawn/ornamental irrigation

Rain sensor

- If using an automatic irrigation system, this is required by Florida law (including mechanical timers and indexing valve systems).
- They make different types and there are multiple manufacturers
 - Most common is the expanding disc type
 - Can be set to different levels, however changing this setting after being installed 3 months can impact the operation of the sensor – so if you want to change the setting, you should install new discs or get a new sensor (unpublished UF research)
 - Rain sensors should be replaced annually or at least every 3 years (results differ depending on the equipment; unpublished UF research)



Expanding disc rain sensor

ET controller

- Take time to make sure all controller inputs are correct.
- If using the on-site weather data or stand-alone type, make sure the weather sensors can be placed in a good location (not in shade or under/next to an obstruction).
- If using remote-weather type, make sure the location can receive signal and that the values are reasonable. ET values received by the controller are viewable – these can be compared to FAWN values as a check. (FAWN web site: <http://fawn.ifas.ufl.edu>). Use a rain sensor with this controller. Remember these type require an annual data fee ~ \$50

Soil water-based irrigation

- Take time to make sure all controller/sensor inputs are correct.
- Make sure the sensor can be placed in a full-sun location that receives water from the system and that it can wire back to a nearby valve or the controller (if necessary).
- BEFORE purchasing check the compatibility of the sensor with existing equipment. Indexing valves – may or may not work. Mechanical timer will likely not work.



Indexing valve and mechanical timer... a MDC classic!



Three indexing valves... want to guess which zone is irrigating?

There are ways to 'trick' a SMS system (or digital timer with SMS add-on) to work with an indexing valve but this takes some manipulation of the system. The problem with this is that once it is set, if someone else doesn't understand this manipulation – the system could be modified in such a way that it doesn't operate correctly. Moral of the story – electronic valves are a better choice.