



High Desert Gardening January 2022

From the Chair of the Landscaping And Trails Committee

John McLaren

At the December 2021 meeting of the Landscape and Trails Committee (LTC), the members decided to embark on an ambitious project to inventory and document the landscaping in the community's common areas in anticipation of working with the new landscape contractors, Green Summit, starting in January 2022. The transition to the new landscaping contract brought to light that we really did not have a good scope of what the community was managing.

The LTC is in the process of mapping each parcel of land, inventorying the trees, shrubs, grasses, and desert accents, and will eventually identify where the irrigation controls are located. It will be a slow process, but hopefully a good snapshot of the community landscaping can be taken to assist us when we transition to owner management of Del Webb Mirehaven in 2022/3. We have a great start on the project with over 100 individual parcels of land mapped and 552 plants already cataloged.

Do you have comments or questions about landscaping in common areas of our community? We would also be happy to hear your ideas for helping the LTC improve educational programs and communication within the community.

The Landscaping and Trails Committee has a new, direct email:

dwlandscapetrails@gmail.com



Winterizing Drip Irrigation Systems and Watering in Winter

S. M. Douglas

According to the weather forecasts, we are likely headed into another very dry La Niña winter season. In addition, fall temperatures in our area were higher than average. These conditions mean we need to continue to water our landscape plants in December-February in order to keep them healthy. The dry, windy weather that are typical of our New Mexico winters can damage or even kill landscape plants if they do not have adequate

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water. Although the plants are dormant, their roots need moisture to survive.

Because of probable freezing temperatures during the winter, it is suggested that you turn off your drip irrigation system for the season.

A good review of how to “Winterize Your Irrigation System” can be found on the 505Outside website: <https://www.505outside.com/2019/11/02/winterize-your-irrigation-system/>

Most established plants in Mirehaven landscapes should be watered once a month during December, January, and February. As you read the winter watering chart for established plants (Figure 1), note the depth of watering listed for different types of plants. For example, trees should be watered once a month to a depth of 24 inches, if we have no rain or snow. However, if we receive more than a ½ inch of rain or more than 6 inches of snow during a month, you can skip watering that month.

WATER BY THE SEASONS WINTER WATERING RECOMMENDATIONS (DECEMBER THRU FEBRUARY) FOR GREATER ALBUQUERQUE		
Plant Type	How Often*	How Deep*
TREES	1 TIME PER MONTH	24" INCHES
SHRUBS	1 TIME PER MONTH	18" INCHES
FLOWERING PLANTS	1 TIME PER MONTH	12" INCHES
DESERT ACCENTS	NONE	12" INCHES
GROUNDCOVER	1 TIME PER MONTH	8" INCHES
GRASS: TURF (COOL SEASON)	2 TIMES PER MONTH	6" INCHES
GRASS: TURF (WARM SEASON)	1 TIME PER MONTH	12" INCHES
GRASS: ORNAMENTAL	1 TIME PER MONTH	10" INCHES
VINES	1 TIME PER MONTH	12" INCHES

*=MONTHLY =WEEKLY

Figure 1. Winter watering recommendations. From the 505Outside website: https://www.505outside.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/WBTS-all4_Final_OL_for-PRINT_7_5-x-6.pdf

In contrast to established plants, newly planted trees and shrubs should be watered every two weeks to depths of 6-8 inches, since their roots are not completely established in the planting site.

For both established and new plants, it is best to avoid watering during freezing temperatures. Winter watering is most effective when it is done during the warmest part of the day, optimally when temperatures are above 40F and the ground is not frozen—these conditions allow the water to soak down to the roots more easily.

Since the drip irrigation system is off, winter watering is usually done by hand with a hose. While winter watering is not a favorite task because it can be tedious, it is important to look at it as an investment in the health and beauty of your landscape plants.

How do I determine depth of watering?

The “Probe Method” is an easy way to determine how deeply water penetrates into your particular soil. The probe can be as simple as a long-shafted screwdriver, a piece of rebar, or a commercial soil probe. Mark the probe with a pre-measured length based on the correct depth of water penetration for the particular plant you are assessing (e.g., 12 inches, 18 inches). Shortly after a completed irrigation cycle (or within 24 hr of watering), gently slide or push the probe into the root zone of the plant to check the watering depth. If the probe goes easily into the soil to the pre-measured depth, you have watered the correct amount of time to deliver the water that plant requires. If the probe does not penetrate into the pre-measured depth, you will need to increase your watering time. Repeat this process at several different locations around the plant to check for uniformity of watering. This process needs to be done once for each type of plant, since the amount of water delivered each time

should be the same as long as your watering protocol is the same.

Watering by hand with a hose

During the winter, most of us opt to water by hand with a hose. However, it is important to detach the hose from the faucet and drain it completely after each watering to avoid possible breaks from freezing. Hand watering should be done by directing the water onto the soil and avoiding plant foliage. Water should be applied to the drip line and way from the trunk to avoid damage to bark. Turning the hose onto a trickle is an effective way to water that helps to avoid runoff and waste. When using this method for watering, it will take longer than you think to water—for example, one hour of trickle watering may penetrate to a depth of 18 inches, depending on the soil type. This is why you need to use a soil probe to determine the depth of water penetration.

Ornamental Grasses

B. Duncombe

If you are curious about ornamental grasses that grow well in the ABQ High Desert and the variety from which to choose, a great site is **505Outside**:

<https://www.505outside.com/plants/grasses/>.

The site includes pictures and descriptions to help make the right decision for your landscaping.

According to the website, *“Ornamental grasses, unlike lawns, serve as horticultural exclamation points and can add interest in areas that need a bit of sprucing up. Summer through early winter is the prime time for the soft textures and colors of ornamental grasses. They should be cut down as close to the ground as possible each spring so the new blades can emerge unencumbered by the*

previous year’s dead leaves. Because this leaves gaps in the planting for several weeks, place the larger grasses as you would shrubs of the same size, mixing in some evergreens or grassy succulents such as Yucca or Beargrass to create interest while the grasses regrow.”

An example of one of the grasses described in the article is a beautiful ornamental grass found throughout our community, **Pink Flamingo Muhly, Muhlenbergia x Pink Flamingo**

(<https://www.505outside.com/2020/10/07/pink-flamingo-muhly-muhlenbergia-x-pinkflamingo/>)



Pink Flamingo Muhly, Muhlenbergia x Pink Flamingo

Exposure: Full Sun

Water: Medium

Height and Spread: H 4' X W 2'

Blooming Season: Fall

Description: Pink Flamingo is a native grass that is heat, cold, and drought resistant. During late summer into mid-fall, wonderful soft pink airy flower spikes appear. This desert friendly grass is ideal to plant in mass or narrow locations. Add this to your garden to lighten it up with a pop of color!

If you are curious about more varieties and how to trim back grasses this coming spring, log on to: <https://www.505outside.com/plants/grasses/>

Educational Opportunities

Upcoming free webinars presented by: New Mexico State Cooperative Extension Service, The NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Los Lunas, NMSU Department of Extension Plant Sciences Upcoming **“Ready, Set, GROW!” Webinars for 2022**. For video recording and slides on topics from the “2021 Ready, Set, GROW! Webinars,” you can visit:

<https://aces.nmsu.edu/desertblooms/ready-set-grow.html>.

Click session titles below to register for each class or go to <https://aces.nmsu.edu/desertblooms/ready-set-grow.html>

- **Jan 19, 2022** "[Common Evergreen Pests in New Mexico](#)" with Dr. John Formby, Forest Health Specialist with NM Forestry
- **Feb 16, 2022** "[Pruning Galore](#)" with Dr. Marisa Thompson, NMSU Extension Urban Horticulture Specialist
- **Mar 16, 2022** "[Spring Veggie Gardening](#)" with John Garlisch, Bernalillo County Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent
- **Apr 20, 2022** “Home Drip Irrigation Systems” with Tom Dominguez, Santa Fe County Cooperative Extension
- **May 18, 2022** “Soil Issues in New Mexico” - Gabriella Coughlin, Agronomist/Agroecologist for the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District
- **June 15, 2022** “Keep It Cool: Shading Your Veggies” with Dr. Stephanie Walker, NMSU Extension Vegetable Specialist

- **July 20, 2022** “Water Storage” with Lynda Garvin, Valencia County Cooperative Extension
- **Aug 17, 2022** “Pollinators” with Miranda Kersten, Senior Program Specialist, NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Los Lunas
- **Sept 21, 2022** “Top 10 Most Common Plant Diagnoses” with Phil Lujan, NMSU Plant Diagnostic Clinic
- **Oct 19, 2022** “Landscaping with Native Plants” (TBA)
- **Nov 16, 2022** “Food Preservation” with Suzanne Cole, Mora County Cooperative Extension
- **Dec 14, 2022** “Landscaping Magic: Inspiration for Your Winter Garden” with Wes Brittenham, Director of Horticulture at Los Poblanos Historic Inn & Organic Farm