



FLIPPED EQUIPPED

Maintenance Instruction Guide

Removing lawn from park strips, also known as “flipping your strip”, or low-use areas is one of several actions Salt Lake County is taking to reduce water use and to feature drought tolerant localscape. Proper and routine maintenance of the localscape (aka, xeric) plant beds at your Salt Lake County facility is essential for creating a sustainable, water-efficient, and visually appealing landscape.

This instruction guide outlines seasonal maintenance tasks for spring, summer, fall, and winter to ensure the health and beauty of the xeric plant beds.

The guide also details specific instructions for:

- Maintaining and winterizing drip irrigation systems
- Addressing weeds with herbicide
- General seasonal tree maintenance
- Pruning of woody shrubs and perennial ornamental grasses



Spring (March–May):

- **Cleanup:** Begin the season by removing any debris, leaves, or dead plant material from the bed. This helps prevent disease and encourages new growth.
- **Pruning:** Trim back any winter-damaged or overgrown branches. Focus on rejuvenating pruning, cutting back up to one-third of the plant's height if needed. NOTE: Cut back grasses and perennials to six (6) inches above ground in early spring.
- **Weeding:** Remove weeds before they become established to reduce competition for water and nutrients.
- **Mulching:** Apply a fresh layer of mulch (2-3 inches) to conserve soil moisture, suppress weeds, and maintain a consistent soil temperature.
- **Fertilization:** Apply a slow-release, low-nitrogen fertilizer suitable for xeric plants. Fertilizer examples include Yum Yum Mix 2-1-1 and Planters II Trace Mineral Fertilizer. These can be used together. Follow the product instructions carefully.

Summer (June–August):

- **Watering:** Monitor soil moisture levels regularly, and water deeply when necessary. It's better to water deeply and infrequently to encourage deep root growth.
- **Weeding:** Continue to remove weeds to reduce water competition.
- **Deadheading:** Remove spent flowers to encourage continuous blooming and prevent self-seeding.

Fall (September–November):

- **Cleanup:** As in spring, remove any debris and spent plant material from the bed.
- **Pruning:** Trim back any overgrown branches or stems to maintain the desired shape of the plants. NOTE: Do not shear (remove new/top growth), pruning is best.
- **Dividing:** If necessary, divide overcrowded perennials to promote healthier growth.
- **Mulching:** Inspect and add a fresh layer of mulch, if needed, before winter to protect roots

For more details, refer to these sections:

- General Seasonal Tree Maintenance Pruning Guidelines
- Pruning Woody Shrubs and Perennial Ornamental Grasses

Winter (December–February):

- **Reduced Watering:** Reduce watering significantly during the dormant period. Water only if the soil appears overly dry.
- **Inspect for Pests:** Take this time to inspect plants for signs of pests or disease. Address any issues promptly.



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Drip Irrigation System Maintenance:

Regular Checks: Throughout the year, inspect your drip irrigation system for clogs, leaks, or damaged components. Clean or replace clogged emitters and hoses as needed.

Fall Reduction in Watering: As temperatures drop in late fall, reduce the frequency and duration of your drip irrigation system to prepare plants for winter dormancy.

Winterization: Before the first frost, it's crucial to winterize your drip irrigation system:

- **Turn Off the System:** Shut off the water supply to the drip system and ensure all valves are closed.
- **Drain the Lines:** Open the end caps and drain valves to remove any remaining water from the lines.
- **Blow out the system with air:** To prevent pipe bursting, blow out the drip lines with compressed air.
- **Cover Valves and Filters:** Use valve and filter covers to protect these components from winter weather.
- **NOTE:** Seek professional assistance for compressed air use.



Weed Control with Herbicides:

When dealing with persistent or invasive weeds, the use of herbicides may be necessary.

Always prioritize safety when handling herbicides:

- **Protective Gear:** Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, long-sleeved clothing, eye protection, and a mask to prevent inhaling fumes.
- **Temperature Considerations:** Apply herbicides within the recommended temperature range specified on the product label. Typically, herbicides are most effective when temperatures are between 60°F (15°C) and 85°F (30°C). Avoid application during extreme heat or cold.
- **Follow Instructions:** Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions on the herbicide label carefully. Pay attention to recommended concentrations and application methods.
- **Timing:** Apply herbicides when weather conditions are suitable and when there is no wind to prevent drift.
- **Targeted Application:** Apply herbicide directly to the weeds you want to eliminate, avoiding contact with desirable plants.
- **Storage and Disposal:** Store herbicides in their original containers in a secure, climate-controlled storage area that is not accessible to the public. Dispose of containers and unused herbicides according to local regulations.

General Seasonal Tree Maintenance Pruning Guidelines:

Proper tree pruning is essential for maintaining tree health and shape.

- **Spring Pruning:** Prune deciduous trees before new growth begins, typically in late winter or early spring. Remove dead or diseased branches, as well as any crossing or rubbing branches. Avoid heavy pruning during this time, as it can stress the tree.
- **Summer Pruning:** Lightly prune to remove water sprouts or suckers. Remove any branches that pose a safety hazard.
- **Fall Pruning:** Avoid significant pruning in the fall to stimulate new growth just before winter.
- **Winter Pruning:** Prune deciduous trees during the dormant season (late fall to early winter). This is the best time for structural pruning and shaping.

Always use sharp, clean tools and make clean cuts to prevent damage and disease.

Consult an arborist for major pruning or if you are unsure about the health of your trees.

Pruning Woody Shrubs and Perennial Ornamental Grasses:

Spring Pruning:

- **Woody Shrubs:** Prune woody shrubs in the spring after the last frost but before new growth begins. Remove dead or damaged branches and shape the shrub(s) as needed by cutting back to branch intersections. Avoid hedging or lollipop pruning because it can harm the shrub's natural form and health.
- **Perennial Ornamental Grasses:** Cut back perennial ornamental grasses to about six inches above the ground in early spring because this encourages new growth and removes old, dead foliage.

Summer Pruning:

- **Woody Shrubs:** Lightly prune to remove any overgrown or straggly growth. Avoid heavy pruning during the summer because it can stress the shrub(s) during hot weather.
- **Perennial Ornamental Grasses:** Minimal pruning is needed during the summer; however, dead or yellowing blades can be removed as needed.

Fall Pruning:

- **Woody Shrubs:** Continue to monitor for dead or damaged branches and prune as necessary. Fall is a good time for final shaping before winter dormancy.
- **Perennial Ornamental Grasses:** Leave ornamental grasses unpruned during the fall to provide winter interest in the garden. You can cut them back in early spring.

With extreme weather, some maintenance timeframes may vary.