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- **The start up of an irrigation system can be a time consuming and sometimes technical process which includes testing the backflow preventer, ensuring proper functionality of the different valves, inspecting and replacing/adjusting irrigation heads, and programming the irrigation timer in accordance with the weather and the type and size of your plant material. Natural Concept Landscape employs irrigation technicians who have many years of experience in not only installing irrigation systems but maintaining them so that each home or business owner has a lush and healthy landscape while conserving water and saving money through proper maintenance of each system. If you would like Natural Concept Landscape to perform this service for you please call our office at the number listed above and ask about our irrigation maintenance program.**

Spring Start-Up Procedures

This is just as important as winterization! When you first turn on your sprinkler or drip system in spring you should always flush it out. During the winter many small critters take up residence in your sprinklers, emitters, tubes, and pipes. Often they manage to squeeze in, only to be unable to get back out when spring comes. Whether they crawl down to a smaller pipe and get wedged, or grow, or whatever, I don't know. But I do know they get in there and they get stuck! So you need to get them out. To do that open the ends of drip tubes and flush them out by turning on the water. For sprinklers remove the nozzles from, at the least, the last head on each pipe (better yet, remove them all) and run the water. When you think the water has run long enough, you're only half way done. Let it run twice that long! The biggest mistake in flushing is not letting the water run long enough. When done, make sure that standing water doesn't drain back into the pipes, taking dirt back in with it! You may need to put a temporary piece of hose or pipe onto the flush outlet to drain the water to a different area. Make sure the hose is as big or bigger than the pipe, you don't want to restrict the flow!

After flushing, check the system out by running it. Look for clogged emitters or nozzles. I don't recommend cleaning plastic sprinkler nozzles, replace them with new ones. Cleaning them leaves small scratches which mess up the spray pattern and create dry spots. Calcium buildup on sprinkler nozzles can be removed using one of the many calcium remover products available for kitchen use. I've never tried it but I've been told that soaking them in drain clog remover also works.!

Check for leaking valves. Often the flexible seals dry out over the winter and leak when the water is turned back on. This is also a good time to think about giving your plants some fertilizer.

Finally, check the controller for proper run times for each station. If it has a back-up battery replace it with a fresh one. Almost all solid state controllers use ALKALINE back-up batteries and will not work right with other kinds- if in doubt use an alkaline type battery. The battery on some controllers is located behind a face plate where you can't see it, so if you don't see a battery, remove the wiring compartment cover and look for it in there.