

# JPA Landscape & Construction, Inc.

April 2015

## 1st Quarter Newsletter

Hello and welcome to our first newsletter for 2015. It has been a few months since our last release and much has happened over this period of time. Namely, the drought we are securely in, has presented a tremendous amount of talk. Over the next few newsletters, we will be covering a range of topics related to the drought and ideas on how to counter the impact through different applications. You may be looking at removing lawns, turning water off, rising water cost, with no one fix solving all of your water problems. We can all agree water is a commodity and the management of it is here to stay. The next four News Letters will focus on several different approaches in management. With all of these considered and possibly implemented, your landscape will be on its way to the best footing for sustainability.



There are a few basics we as water users need to operate from and come to terms with before an effective method of control can be implemented with any lasting success. The first one is to look at the units of water used. Let me repeat **"the units of water used"**. This is the starting point, **not the dollars on the water bill**. Most often, if not always, our first action is to look at the water bill dollar amount and then go straight into disbelief and then directly to knee jerk mandates. What is critical here when these perfectly natural reactions begin to take over common sense is to stop and remember you are running a business and one of your expenses is water? Obviously this is a critical operating component to your business, so simply cutting it by an arbitrary amount or removing it from the budget doesn't work long term.

In business, the normal course of action is to understand the expense, how it is used, who is using it, what are the impacts to the business, and how cuts can be made so the service is better utilized and provide equal or improved value.

**Now this may seem like a long process... However,** businesses everywhere routinely experience specific line items in their budget that have ballooned or become limited in availability. Take for example the recent implementation of the American Care

Act. Businesses for the past few years have been figuring out how they will absorb a new budget expense. Businesses work through these issues regularly and find that they can in fact continue with some reallocation of funds, small service cost increases, and changing the way somethings are done internally. When it is all said and done, we look back and say "**wow how come I didn't make these changes years ago? I could have saved X dollars for the past Y years!**" Using this example let's look at how much water we are using.

A good place to start is selecting a point in time as the bases for measuring water. We recommend using 2013 as that base line with the understanding this will be our high water mark. Now take the 2014 water bill and match it to 2013 to calculate the difference. The quickest way to see all of this on one page is to use the Dec 2014 water bill. Most water agencies post a graph of the previous 12 months of use and show the previous year's consumption in a difference shade of ink. Remember the dollar amount is not important at this stage, so leave that alone for now.

For properties serviced by water agencies that had defined watering days and mandatory compliance, 2014 will reflect the minimum water need to keep the landscape alive. For those who have inspected their properties, it will probably be a case of "sure it is alive, but it looks terrible". Therefore the needed water per period or annually should be somewhere between 2013 and 2014. We now have our first starting point. Let's look at how we can drill this number down to defined quantities for use as a baseline.

**Here are the three questions that need to be answered:**

- **How many turf, shrub, and tree valves are there?**
- **How is the water use divided up between each of these watering categories?**
- **Are there areas in the landscape that can be allowed to decline because the cost to restore them to a more user friendly landscape is less than the "long term" cost of water to keep them alive?**

Now you can meet with your landscape maintenance provider and discuss the irrigation programming for 2013 and 2014. The water allocation between the three plant categories can be seen through some simple math work of adding up runtimes. The finished product will look something like this:

## Water Usage

**Turf: 40%**  
**Shrub: 50%**  
**Trees: 10%**



With this information both the property owner and the landscape company can **implement strategic changes** to the irrigation program without investing any money. This is the first place to start to manage a plan that produces consistent and measurable results.

The question being asked is **why aren't we doing this?** Well you should be. When was the last time you sent a water bill to your Landscape Management Contractor? Sure the contractor can collect this information but they will be saddled with all the additional work of collecting, calculating, recording, and maintaining. You want him focused on finding ways to improve water applications through adjustments and

programming, not performing administration type of work. **Why not provide the contractor with the information, so all parties are working off the same information of "apples to apples."**

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