

episode five: Garden Maintenance in the Sustainability Zone



In the fifth episode, through the simple act of adjusting their irrigation controller, Billy and Owen find themselves traveling back in time to the sustainability zone, where unenlightened gardening practices reign! From tips on pruning, mowing, composting and integrated pest management, to irrigation maintenance, the Wise Guys share advice to help you create a naturally beautiful, water saving, low maintenance landscape.

key concepts

1. Pruning

- For most perennials, get rid of your old, large hedge clippers and use only pruning shears. (See photo at right.)
- **Hearty perennials** need to be cut back to the ground once in the winter season.
- **Shrubs and flowering plants** need **deadheading** in which only the spent flower or top layer needs to be removed for the continuation of new growth.
- **Woody plants** need to be pruned from the inside out for structure.



2. Mowing

- Bring back your old push mower! The lawn clippings can provide nutrients if left on the ground.
- Gas mowers are expensive, petroleum-dependent and noisy.

3. Compost Yard Trimmings

- Don't let valuable nutrients go to waste! Use your greenwaste for composting & return nutrients to the soil.
- Invest in a mulching mower.

4. Integrated Pest Management

- Always start with the most benign treatment
- Choose non-toxic substances
- Simple solutions include: squirting off insects, using insecticidal soap, worm castings and natural predators
- If the plant in question is a chronic problem...consider taking it out!
- For **slugs** and **snails**: A saucer of beer (domestic is fine) will attract and drown snails and slugs, or let a non-rubber chicken roam free.



5. Irrigation Maintenance

- Set your watering schedule according to plant needs, soil type and weather.
- If a **spray head** gets knocked off, replace it with a **swing joint riser** and set it to desired height above surface
- If a sprinkler isn't firing evenly, there might be a dirt clog or the filter needs to be replaced
- Adjust heads to spray over shrubs using risers for higher watering efficiencies

6. Irrigation Controller

- Get to know your controller!
- Set different stations for different types of plants and watering needs
- Check sprinklers and drip systems 4 times a year for leaks, overspray, etc and make repairs
- Clean **drip system filter** every couple months for greater efficiency
- Use a rain sensor to automatically shut-off controller when it rains
- Check out smart irrigation controllers



Cathie's Final Tips

1. Think you have a leak?
Turn off all water in house and check outdoor water meter for a spinning triangle. Movement means a leak in the house!
2. Look for maintenance hot spots and begin pruning from there.
3. Always use an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach.
4. Learn how to set and control your irrigation timer and program seasonally.

