

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER FLUSHING OF DRIP LINES



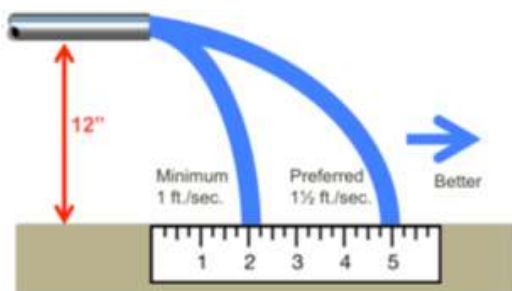
Drip irrigation has been a technological innovation to help growers during hard times of drought and help growers apply water precisely where the crop requires. Although simplistic in nature, drip lines require maintenance in order to work at full potential. During the peak times of irrigation, where irrigation sets can run up to almost 24/7, it is extremely important to maintain a clean system to avoid unnecessary blockages. While some of these blockages can occur from water quality problems, there are also many mechanical issues that need to be addressed.

How often are irrigators flushing both laterals and individual lines? The answer most commonly received is the text book answer; beginning of season, varies times during season, and at the end of the season. Sometimes the answer is truthful while most of the time the answer is not truly known. Negative impacts can result in excess build-up of sediment and biologicals entering the drip emitter path and decreasing output flow or plugging the emitter completely.

"What is the protocol for keeping my lines clean?" you may ask. It is recommended that you flush each hose end open for a period of time of 1 second for every foot of hose length from the riser.

For example, if the average run is 250 feet, flush the hose with the ends open for 250 ft. X 1 sec/ft. = 250 seconds (a little over 4 minutes).

You want there to be velocity or scouring occurring during the flush so it is very important that not too many hoses are open at one time. While there is no perfect number on how many hoses to do at one



time. Begin by doing 5 hoses at one time and inspecting the amount of pressure being put out, and then increase or decrease as needed. Don't be fooled by the quick clear up of water within the first 30 seconds to a minute, allow the hose to flush and remove any buildup that may be trapped in between the end and the riser. Back to the text book answer, it is suggested that you flush at the beginning of the season, and at least monthly during the season (more often for buried drip). Lastly, it is extremely important to flush at the end of the season to leave the system as clean as possible during dormant months. Remembering to follow these simple steps will help ensure that your growing season has one less issue to worry about.

Quick Check List:

- Flush all laterals
- Flush individual hoses, using table above and to left
- Always flush in beginning of season, various times during growing season, end of season
- Suggested winterizing system at end of year

