

10 Things To Consider In A Smart Controller

Across the United States and throughout the world, the cost of water is increasing at a dramatically accelerated rate. In today's challenging economic climate, this is no small matter. According to the EPA, more than half of the US will suffer water sustainability issues by 2013. Everyone is looking for ways to save money on their energy and water costs and the resources required to maintain these systems in their businesses and homes.

Increasingly, businesses and consumers are turning to smart irrigation controllers as streamlined way to save significant amounts of water and money. Knowing the pros and cons of the various smart irrigation solutions on the market can greatly impact your savings. Here are ten things you should consider when choosing which smart irrigation controller and software to use:

- 1. Monthly or Yearly Fees** – Although most smart irrigation solutions guarantee savings, many require monthly subscription fees in order to fully function as smart systems. In other words, subscription models amount to diminished savings due to monthly weather data and/or communication charges. Look for a system like Cyber Rain that does not charge fees for weather data and uses existing communication infrastructures such as the internet that are already present and operating at your business or home.
- 2. Ease of Use** – Most smart irrigation solutions employ a weather/evapotranspiration (“ET”) algorithm that determines how much water to apply to irrigation zones. ET parameters, such as soil type, plant type, and sun exposure, are applied in the irrigation controller’s software and can be complex to set up and manage. Some systems require that the user specify up to 20 different parameters in order to be properly configured. Enter Cyber Rain’s unique, headache-free approach called SmartET™. SmartET™ alleviates the complexity imposed by other smart irrigation solutions and requires only five basic pieces of information: plant type, sprinkler type, amount of sun, amount of slope, and soil type. Using this basic information, Smart ET™ automatically recommends the optimal watering schedule for your landscape. Of course, if the user prefers the standard ET interface that other systems use, Cyber Rain offers that interface as well.
- 3. Automatic Failure Alerts and Notification** – Look for a smart irrigation system that automatically detects faults in piping, solenoids, and sprinkler heads. A smart controller should notify the user of detected malfunctions via email and/or text message. The best smart irrigation solutions go one step further and automatically manage detected faults by shutting off afflicted zones, for example in the case of a broken sprinkler head.
- 4. Remote Access via Smartphones** – Look for a system that can access and manage irrigation from any internet connected computer as well as a smartphone. Cyber Rain provides free apps for iPhone, Blackberry, and Android based smartphones.
- 5. Warranty** – Investing in Smart irrigation is typically done with the expectation of a long

service life before needing replacement. Look for a system that has at least a five year warranty.

- 6. Accurate Weather Data and Information** – Smart irrigation depends on having the most accurate weather information possible in order to function properly. Cyber Rain is partnered with Weather Underground, a company that has the most extensive network of weather stations available in the world and the most accurate weather information.
- 7. Ease Of Installation** – Look for a smart irrigation system that can easily be installed to replace an existing irrigation system without requiring a significant amount of additional wiring and infrastructure in order to operate. A smart controllers should install as would any other controller, using the existing wiring that is already in place. Watering times should be easily scheduled and modified at any time either on site or remotely using an internet connected computer.
- 8. Central Irrigation Management Using Web/Cloud Based Technology** - A smart irrigation system should be able to access and manage irrigation sites without requiring a dedicated computer. Look for a solution that can manage an unlimited number controllers and sites from anywhere in the world using any internet connected computer. Users should be able to alter irrigation schedules, manually water zones, and program irrigation holds all from a remote location. Furthermore, users should also be able to track water consumption through detailed statistical reports and charts.
- 9. Low Tco (Total Cost Of Ownership) And Rapid Payback Of Your Investment** – Many smart irrigation systems promise significant water savings. However, in many cases these savings are all but eclipsed by required ongoing data and communications fees and software maintenance agreements. Look for a system that not does have these fees. In addition, look for water conservation rebates that may exist in your area and choose a system that qualifies for these rebates. Check out the EPA's new Watersense program at <http://www.epa.gov/watersense/> or the Irrigation Association's SWAT (Smart Water Application Technologies at <http://www.irrigation.org/SWAT/> to see the latest in water conservation products and rebates for smart irrigation.
- 10. Consumption Reporting** – Knowing what's going on with your irrigation and how much water you're saving is an important part of any smart irrigation system. Unfortunately many smart irrigation solutions only make these features available for an additional charge. Look for a system that provides information about water usage and savings as a standard feature in their irrigation software. Also make sure this information can be exported to an external spreadsheet program for long term management and storage.

Consider these factors when purchasing your smart irrigation system and you'll be on the right track to selecting a top notch product like Cyber Rain. Cyber-Rain enables users to not only save a significant amount of money and water but also empowers them to devote less time and energy otherwise spent manually irrigating with a dumb controller. Best of all, Cyber-Rain pays for itself in a very short period of time.