agencies eager to reduce water waste and runoff from irrigated landscapes.

Some communities offer cash incentives to encourage homeowners to replace their older controllers with smart units. The San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA), for example, gives homeowners $350 rebates for replacing their standard timers with smart controllers. Other water purveyors, most of them located in the arid Southwest U.S., have similar programs.

All major irrigation suppliers offer smart controllers. Years of testing have shown that when properly installed and tuned, the units cut related water consumption and costs 15% to 30%.

Interaction still important

While replacing an older clock with a smart controller generally reduces water use, occasionally property managers are surprised when irrigation water use goes up. In some instances, older clock actually might have been providing too little irrigation, or the coverage was so uneven that large portions of the landscape were under-watered.

"It took some time for us to learn how to use it, But we’re getting really good in setting up these systems and managing these controllers now," said John Gachina of his company’s experiences. "I think there is a misconception by some people that you buy these smart controllers and they take care of themselves. They need care and feeding as you’re gaining experience with them."

Gachina, owner of Gachina Landscape Management, Menlo Park, CA, says that his irrigation technicians recommend smart controllers to customers — but only where they’re appropriate.

"When we look at a system, we want to know whether it’s a good candidate for a smart controller. If it’s not because of a poorly designed system, then we’ll talk to the customer about how to upgrade the system," he says. "The controller won’t adjust for bad system design."

Landscape irrigation efficiency is increasingly important because of environmental and financial considerations. The U.S. EPA estimates that as much as 50% of water used for landscape irrigation is wasted. Overwatering results in runoff and non-point source pollution; wasted water and energy (including the cost of infrastructure to meet peak demands); damage to hardscapes and foundations; added liability; higher water bills; and damage to turfgrass and ornamentals.

Will Johnson, owner of Seco Landscape in San Diego, says his passion for installing water-efficient landscapes is reflected in the name of his company — seco is the Spanish word for dry.

"A smart controller is a tool, and like any other tool, you have to use it correctly," Johnson says. "The beauty of this tool is that after I’ve programmed the timer and I leave the homeowner’s..."
property, I know that, at least this season, the landscape will be watered appropriately and that water is not going to run into the street."

But even with smart technology, you can't "set it and forget it" — at least not in the $300 to $500 price range most customers are willing to pay for a timer.

**Compare features**

In pursuit of water savings and to reduce non-point-source pollution, the U.S. EPA has partnered with the Irrigation Association (IA) to test water-efficient products that can be promoted through its voluntary, three-year-old WaterSense program.

### AT A GLANCE

**Smart controllers**

- The technology is established on golf courses and sports fields.
- All major irrigation manufacturers offer them.
- There are two basic types: climate-based and sensor-based.
- Climate-based controllers receive regular signals of prevailing weather conditions from local weather stations that update the current evapotranspiration rate to the units.
- Sensor-based systems typically have historic weather data programmed into their memories for baselines and adjust irrigation as they receive real-time data on rainfall, temperature, sunlight, humidity, slope and soil moisture.
- When properly set up on well-designed systems, they can save up to 30% of water usage.
- The U.S. EPA will consider them for the first irrigation product for its WaterSense labeling program.

That process is under way for smart climate-based controllers, the first irrigation product category being considered for WaterSense labeling. You can compare the capabilities of tested smart controllers — climate-based and sensor-based — online at www.irrigation.org.

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Vince Lombardi, John Wooden, Red Auerbach, Dean Smith, Bear Bryant, John McGraw, George Halas, Don Shula, Paul Brown, Knute Rockne.

All of these legends were known for getting the most out of each individual and each team they coached. The same is true for Landscape Management's legendary Green Industry business coaches. That's why we've launched seven inaugural LM Consulting Clubs — a brain trust of business coaches proven to help lawn care, landscape, design/build and irrigation contractors, and industry suppliers and associations, bolster everything from customer and employee relationships to revenues and margins to strategic planning and overall business valuations.

As part of their nominal membership fees, LM Consulting Club Members receive the right to schedule up to three TeleConsulting sessions, each up to one-hour long, with the respective Club's legendary business coach. The one-on-one TeleConsulting sessions come at a reduced rate thanks to our consulting partners' desire to help our readers thrive — not just survive these turbulent times.

In addition to receiving three hours of TeleConsulting at reduced rates, LM Consulting Club Members also will be mailed:
- Jeffrey Scott's "The Referral Advantage" book;
- Jeffrey Scott's "Accelerate Your Business Growth — Even In a Down Economy — By Making Use of Peer Groups" tip sheet;
- Harvey Goldglantz's "Marketing Matters — The Ultimate Reference Guide to Making the Most of Your Marketing Money" book; and

Following are the seven inaugural LM Consulting Clubs launched in mid-February:

1. **LM's The Leaders Edge Consulting Club** — Jeffrey Scott, president of Landscape Success Systems, coaches business owners on building their brands, captivating their clients, and implementing new systems to grow business profitably.

2. **LM's Marketing Matters Consulting Club** — Harvey Goldglantz coaches contractors on ways to win more business, through the use of his creative marketing techniques, despite shoestring budgets.

3. **LM's Profit & Value Builder Consulting Club** — Kevin Kehoe coaches companies on how to increase their revenues, profits and total business valuation. He also works with Frank Ross and Jeff Harkness, who assist with acquisitions and selling the business.

4. **LM's People Power Consulting Club** — Bill Hoopes shares how he has made a career out of turning bosses into coaches, struggling teams into winners, and customers into raving fans.

5. **LM's Best Practices Consulting Club** — Coaches Bruce Wilson and Tom Oyler, organizers of the popular Wilson-Oyler Success Series seminars, share detailed game plans and sound advice for almost any business scenario.

6. **LM's InfoTech Consulting Club** — Tyler Whitaker (aka The Wizard of IT) coaches companies on deploying technologies proven to save money and improve business.

7. **LM's The Deal Maker Consulting Club** — Norm Cooper, former president of the National Pest Management Association, brings decades of merger-and-acquisition experience to his business transition coaching.

LM Consulting Club Members who join by June 30 receive an additional $300 discount. There are two multi-membership options: LM Trifecta Consulting Club Members buy two memberships and receive 50% off a third membership, while LM Four Horsemen Consulting Club Members buy three memberships and get one free.

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