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To: Rains County Leader

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Drip Irrigation for the Vegetable Garden

Summer is fast approaching and you must start think about protecting your spring vegetable gardens. Now is the time to plan on a way to supplement the rainfall we depend on.

The best technique to water vegetable gardens is drip irrigation. Drip is controlled, slow application of water to soil. The water flows under low pressure through plastic pipe or hose laid along each row of plants.

The basic concepts behind the successful use of drip irrigation are that soil moisture remains relatively constant, and air, as essential as water is to the plant root system, is always available. Other watering methods such as flood or sprinkler create a wide fluctuation in the soil water content, temperature and aeration of the soil. The greatest thing about drip irrigation is that it only requires about half as much water as furrow or sprinkler irrigation because the water is applied drip by drip to the plant roots.

The financial investment in a drip irrigation system is reasonably small if you spend a few hours to plan, assemble and install the system. Savings in water and increased yield and quality can more than pay for the costs of parts to install and maintain a drip system.

A typical house faucet puts out 3 to 5 gallons per minute and limits the area that can adequately be irrigated using a drip system to not more than 1500 to 2000 sq. ft.

One word of caution is to locate the area to be irrigated as close to the faucet as possible. It is difficult to get enough volume to run the drip system properly.

Take time to give this idea some thought and visit some garden centers that handle drip irrigation equipment and check it out. With drip irrigation you will most likely have the best vegetable garden you have ever had.