

## **Water Conservation**

By Rebecca Miller-Cripps

If you have lived in California for any length of time, you know that wet years can alternate with dry years, and periods of sufficient rain and snowfall can be interspersed with several years of drought conditions.

In general, Californians use two million acre-feet of water more each year than we receive in rain and snowfall. Suffice it to say, that even when winter brings us plenty of water, water is still an issue in California.

We live in a Mediterranean climate...one that is mitigated by an ocean influence, wet in the winter, but very hot and dry in the summer. The lawns and non-native plantings we enjoy are only available because of complex water delivery systems developed to provide water all year round.

As California's population grows, the demand for water will also increase. In addition, there are warning signs that our climate is heating up gradually, eventually causing rainfall at higher elevations where we now enjoy snow pack. This, in turn, will increase the amount of run-off during rainstorms and reduce the amount of water stored as snow.

The indicators are clear that we need to steward the resources we have and learn to respect water as the precious, life-giving commodity that it is. One way to respect it is to be careful with its use. When you save water, you also save money (those complex delivery systems don't appear for free).

What can you do to reduce water use at home? Group your plants so that similar water needs are together. For example, don't grow lawn under the oaks—lawn needs summer water, oaks don't. Impatiens and hydrangeas wilt easily so they need frequent watering. Junipers, in contrast, can go a long time without water. In fact, in this area most junipers die from over watering, especially if they're planted at the edge of a lawn. Most of us underestimate the amount of water available in the soil, therefore, we over water.

Composts and mulches help conserve water by keeping soil cool and slowing evaporation. They also add organic matter to the soil, helping with drainage and water holding capacity.

Inside the house...check for water leaks—a leaking toilet is the most common reason for water loss. Leaks inside your toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water per day! Using toilet tank leak detector tablets give you a quick, easy way to check for leaks. For TUD customers please stop by TUD's offices at 18885 Nugget Blvd., in Sonora to pick up your free toilet tank leak detector tablets. Toilet leaks may be hard to find. They are normally caused by a bad flapper valve, flapper valve seat, a bad ballcock valve, an improperly positioned float arm or defective overflow tube. How to Test Your Toilet: 1) Test the toilet by dropping one dye tablet into the tank and stir slightly. 2) DO NOT FLUSH. Wait at least five minutes. 3) If color appears in your bowl, you have a leak and repairs need to be made. If you are a TUD customer you might also be eligible for a rebate for replacing your toilet. Here is the webpage for additional information: [http://www.tudwater.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/ToiletRebate\\_2014.pdf](http://www.tudwater.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/ToiletRebate_2014.pdf) .

If you're in the market for a new dishwasher or washing machine, check out the new low water use models. New washers use 18-25 gallons of water per load, compared to 40 gallons for standard washers. Not only will you save water, but electricity as well.

If we all treat water like the precious resource it is, we may just be able to pull through this historic drought, the worst in over a century.

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