**DROUGHT RESPONSE:**
Otay Calls for Level 2 Conservation Actions

In response to the extreme drought conditions impacting Southern California, the Otay Water District is calling for its customers to take Level 2 conservation actions under its Water Shortage Contingency Plan, reducing water use by 10 to 20%. Customers are encouraged to take full advantage of water-saving rebates, classes, and resources offered through the District.

In October 2021, the District declared a Shortage Level 1 Drought Alert, and in June 2022, called for customers to take Level 2 actions to comply with the State Water Resource Control Board’s Water Conservation Emergency Regulation.

The region continues to monitor the state’s direction for the potential need for extraordinary water conservation measures. Severe drought in other parts of the state can affect everyone, including San Diego County. Customers should continue what they have been doing to conserve and, in addition, prevent any of the wasteful water-use practices listed on the right. If customers do not save and conditions worsen, we could face stricter mandatory measures in the near future.

To learn more about drought, conservation programs, and rebates visit otaywater.gov/drought.

The following actions are prohibited:

- Irrigating after 10 a.m. or before 6 p.m.
- Irrigating more than three days a week.
- Irrigation resulting in runoff or overspray.
- Using a hose to irrigate landscaped areas unless the hose is fitted with a shut-off nozzle.
- Watering landscape using sprinklers for more than 10 minutes per watering station per day.
- Washing down paved surface areas, including but not limited to driveways, patios, and sidewalks (except when needed to alleviate health and safety concerns).
- Irrigating turf on public medians.
- Irrigating during a rainstorm and for 48 hours after one-fourth (1/4”) of an inch of rainfall.
- Washing vehicles more than once per week and using a hose to wash vehicles without an automatic shutoff nozzle or bucket.
- Using decorative water fountains or other decorative water features unless they use recycled or recirculated water.
- Using potable water for construction purposes.
- Using potable water to irrigate non-functional turf on commercial, industrial, and institutional properties.

Some exceptions may be made: 1) the user must certify that the turf species needs low levels of water — a plant factor of 0.3 or less and 2) the user must demonstrate that the turf is irrigated in a way that uses low levels of water — less than 40% of reference evapotranspiration.
Chula Vista Couple Wins WaterSmart Landscape Contest

Program Exhibits the Importance of Water-Efficient Yards During Drought

Homeowners Bryan and Denee Felber have earned the title “Best in District” in the Otay Water District’s 2022 WaterSmart Landscape Contest. The 2,143 square feet of turf they converted to a drought-tolerant garden in 2015 continues to beautify the neighborhood and save water for the Chula Vista residents.

Before relandscaping, the Felbers faced the high maintenance and cost that comes with keeping a grassy lawn vibrant and green. In 2015, they decided to make a change and join the San Diego County Water Authority’s WaterSmart Landscape Makeover Program, which teaches residents the easiest and most efficient ways to create and maintain a low-water-use yard.

That same year, through the Turf Replacement Program, they received a rebate to replace 5,007 square feet of their front and back yards. But they didn’t stop there — eventually, the couple replaced an additional 202 square feet of their side yard.

Spray nozzles are no longer a feature in their front yard. Instead, a drip system irrigates the plants on a programmed schedule of about three days a week. When rain is expected, the system is turned off or delayed for a few days. A dry riverbed that runs across the landscape captures and directs rainfall, minimizing water runoff.

Their completed landscape has allowed the Felbers to reduce their overall water use by approximately 33% compared to the years before upgrading.

When asked if they recommend others to consider upgrading their yards, Bryan responded “Absolutely!”

“It’s easier and requires much less time to maintain and it saves money,” said Bryan. “Designed well, it can be beautiful with far less water, reducing water demand, and preserving its supply.”

To learn more and see photos, visit otaywater.gov/landscape-contest-winners-2022.

Beat the heat this summer with a cold glass of tap water! Customers can feel confident that the water that Otay delivers to their taps is clean and safe to drink. In 2021, the District met all state and federal public health drinking water standards. Its annual Consumer Confidence Report provides water quality test results and more information about the drinking water delivered by the District. To view the report in English or Spanish, visit otaywater.gov/ConsumerConfidenceReport. To request a printed copy, email info@otaywater.gov, call (619) 670-2222, or visit 2554 Sweetwater Springs Blvd., Spring Valley, CA 91978.
Drought Proof Your Garden for New Watering Restrictions

There is no denying we are in a very serious drought that is only getting worse. While San Diego County is not under drought restrictions now, the state has asked everyone to cut back water use by 10 to 20%. The easiest place to cut back water use is outdoors, but likely not in the way you think. Rather than turn off your garden’s irrigation, first rethink, repurpose, and readjust. You CAN have a beautiful garden on a very low-water diet. The point of irrigating is to get water into the soil to supply plant roots.

HOW MUCH TO WATER?
Rather than running your sprinklers daily or on a schedule that matches your neighbors’, or letting the gardener take charge, figure out how long and often your plants truly need water. Here is how:

How long to water: turn on each irrigation zone and let it run for the usual time. Use a soil probe or stick your finger into the soil to feel how deep the water has penetrated. The goal is to get the water deep down to the roots. If it isn’t that deep, run the zone again and repeat until the deep soil is wet. Note how long it took – that’s how long to water. Don’t be surprised if each zone needs a different run time. Remember though, under the current level 2 actions, you should not water your landscape using sprinklers for more than 10 minutes per watering station per day.

How often to water: do the Canary Test. Now that you know how long to water each zone, test how often to water. Run a zone using its new run time and mark that day on your calendar. Wait to water that zone again until the first plant in that zone starts to look a little droopy – that’s the canary. It may take five or 10 days, or two weeks. Set that zone to run a day or two short of the time it takes for the canary to droop. Repeat for every irrigation zone in your garden. For detailed instructions for the Canary Test, visit tinyurl.com/canarytestgiveaway. Currently, under the level 2 actions, you should not irrigate more than three days a week.

How often to water changes through the seasons – more often in the heat of summer; less often in the cool of winter; in between spring and fall. Test in each season, then adjust the irrigation schedule. Keep the run time constant year-round.

SWITCH TO EFFICIENT IRRIGATION
Change overhead spray and old-fashioned drip irrigation to in-line drip irrigation.

Overhead irrigation wastes up to half the water it sprays (you pay for all that wasted water). Plus, why irrigate leaves when plants take water up through their roots? Old style drip – single emitters at the end of tiny tubes – falls apart, clogs, and breaks, all of which wastes water. Switch to in-line drip instead. In-line drip has emitters embedded in the wall of the irrigation tubing. What looks like a hole from the outside is the port of a very sophisticated emitter that releases water drop by drop. The water penetrates directly into the soil to reach plant roots. It saturates the entire root zone to supply plants efficiently and effectively.

MULCH BARE SOIL
Once there is water in the soil, keep it there as long as possible. A layer of mulch over drip irrigation lines serves as a water insulating blanket. Mulch vegetable gardens with straw. Mulch succulent gardens with rock. Mulch nonsucculent-ornamental gardens and orchards with aged or composted wood mulch. Layer mulch at least 3-inches thick. Renew regularly.

Don’t mulch gardens irrigated with overhead spray. It takes much more water to first saturate the mulch and then saturate the soil. Switch to in-line drip, then mulch.

Do not use weedcloth, landscape cloth, weed fabric, etc. All are the same. All keep water from penetrating into the soil. All keep mulch from integrating into the soil. None prevents weeds.

REPLACE YOUR LAWN
Lawns use as much water as swimming pools. Replace your lawn with beautiful drought-tolerant plants – not with artificial turf, which brings a host of other problems and doesn’t help battle climate change. Solarize or sheet mulch to kill your lawn this summer (visit kpbs.org/news/arts-culture/2016/04/26/growing-passion-bye-bye-grass-how-remove-your-lawn).

CHANGE YOUR PLANT PALETTE
We are fortunate to have a huge palette of beautiful drought-tolerant plants that grow beautifully in our gardens with little if any irrigation once plants are established. Choose from California native plants, plants from Australia, South Africa, the Mediterranean basin, and coastal Chile. For some inspiration, check out my latest book, “Hot Color Dry Garden,” waterwisegardener.com/product/hot-color-in-the-dry-garden, and watch kpbs.org/news/arts-culture/2016/05/04/ growing-passion-after-lawn-gone-waterwise-gardens.

GO GRAY
Reuse the water from your washing machine, bathtub, shower, and sinks to water fruit trees and ornamental shrubs and trees. Washing machine gray water systems called “laundry to landscape” are easiest to install, require no permits, and are inexpensive. You won’t generate enough graywater to meet your entire garden’s needs but it can make a big difference.

NOTE: DO NOT use graywater for vegetable gardens (visit video. kpbs.org/video/growing-passion-waterwise-wonderful).

SAVE HEATING WATER
Put a bucket under the bathtub spout, shower, and kitchen sink to catch the water wasted while it warms. Use the water for container plants and those in the ground. It may be a “drop in the bucket,” but it can make a huge difference.

Register for classes and events at thegarden.org or call (619) 660-0614 x10

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RESPUESTA A LA SEQUÍA:
Otay invita a sus clientes a tomar medidas de conservación de Nivel 2

Debido a las condiciones de sequía extrema que afectan el sur de California, el Distrito de Agua de Otay hace un llamado a sus clientes para que tomen medidas de conservación de Nivel 2 que, de acuerdo con el Plan de Contingencia de Escasez de Agua, el uso del vital líquido se reduce entre un 10 y un 20%. Se invita a los clientes a aprovechar al máximo los reembolsos, las clases y los recursos que se ofrecen a través del Distrito para ahorrar agua.

En octubre de 2021, el Distrito declaró una Alerta de Sequía de Nivel 1 de Escasez. En junio de 2022, el Distrito pidió a los clientes que tomaran medidas de Nivel 2 para cumplir con el Reglamento de Emergencia de Conservación de Agua de la Junta Estatal de Control de Recursos Hídricos.

La región continúa monitoreando muy de cerca la situación en el estado y la posible necesidad de implementar medidas extraordinarias de conservación de agua. La sequía severa en otras partes del estado puede afectar a todos, incluyendo el condado de San Diego. Los clientes deben continuar conservando agua y, además, evitar las prácticas de desperdicio de agua que se indican continuación. Si los clientes no ahorran y las condiciones empeoran, podríamos enfrentarnos a medidas obligatorias más estrictas en un futuro cercano.

Para aprender más acerca de la sequía, los programas de conservación de agua y los reembolsos disponibles, por favor visite otaywater.gov/sequia.

Las siguientes actividades están prohibidas:

- Riego después de las 10 a. m. o antes de las 6 p. m.
- Riego de más de 3 días por semana.
- Irrigación que resulte en escorrentía o exceso de rociado.
- Uso de manguera para regar áreas de jardín a menos que la manguera esté equipada con una boquilla de cierre.
- Regar el jardín con aspersores durante más de 10 minutos por estación al día.
- Lavado de áreas pavimentadas, incluidos, entre otros, entradas de vehículos, patios y aceras (excepto cuando sea necesario para evitar problemas de salud y seguridad).
- Riego de césped en los camellones públicos.
- Riego durante una tormenta y durante las 48 horas después de un cuarto (1/4”) de pulgada de lluvia.
- Lavado de vehículos más de una vez por semana y usar mangueras sin boquilla de cierre automático o balde.
- Usar fuentes u otros accesorios de agua decorativos a menos que usen agua reciclada o recirculada.
- Uso de agua potable para fines de construcción.
- Utilizar agua potable para regar el césped “no funcional” en propiedades comerciales, industriales e institucionales. Se pueden hacer algunas excepciones: 1) el usuario debe certificar que el césped necesita niveles bajos de agua (un factor de planta de 0.3 o menos), 2) el usuario debe demostrar que el césped se riega de tal manera que utiliza niveles bajos de agua (menos del 40% de la evapotranspiración de referencia).

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