Poster Contest Winners Illustrate Value of Water During Drought

Five student artists have won Otay Water District’s 2022 Water is Life Student Poster Contest for their creativity in demonstrating why water is a precious but limited resource during drought.

Every year, the educational program invites K-12 grade students in the District’s service area to enter the contest. They are encouraged to reflect on the importance of using water wisely and illustrate why water is life.

“With daily reminders about the drought that we have in Southern California, I thought it was important to incorporate this into the art curriculum, and we did have a lot of fun with it,” said Elizabeth Cordle, an art teacher from Hillsdale Middle School. “It was very rewarding as an art teacher to see how creative students could be.”

Winners were selected among 123 submissions to receive various prizes and were recognized during a District Board of Directors meeting.

The winners are:
- High school first place: Michael Armenion, eleventh grade, Otay Ranch High School
- Middle school first place: Khilee Haull, seventh grade, Hillsdale Middle School
- Middle school second place: Fatima Altai, seventh grade, Hillsdale Middle School
- Elementary first place: Angie Zhong, sixth grade, Thurgood Marshall Elementary School
- Elementary second place: Christian-Kealoha Rogacion, fifth grade, Thurgood Marshall Elementary School

In addition, the District entered the winning posters in the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California’s student art contest for a chance to be featured in the 2023 Water is Life calendar. MWD selected two winners, Khilee Haull and Christian-Kealoha Rogacion, to represent Otay in the calendar.

“We are proud to see a young generation of students share their awareness about water conservation and stewardship when it matters most,” said Eileen Salmeron, communications assistant and contest coordinator. “As California faces a drought, we hope students and their families understand that making small changes at home or school to conserve can make a big difference in building resiliency against drought.”

See all the winning posters at otaywater.gov/poster-contest-winners-2022.
Otay Reminds Customers to Take Level 2 Conservation Actions

California is experiencing a long-term drought. To comply with the State’s Emergency Regulation, the District continues to call for customers to take Shortage Level 2 conservation actions, reducing water use by up to 20%. The District reminds customers of the actions prohibited under these measures.

PROHIBITED ACTIONS:
• Irrigating after 10 a.m. or before 6 p.m.
• Irrigating more than 3 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 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).

For more information on drought, visit otaywater.gov/drought. To learn more about available rebates, visit otaywater.gov/conservation-programs.

Financial Assistance is Available for Low-Income Households

District customers may be eligible for financial assistance to pay their water or sewer bills. The Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) is a one-time, federally funded relief program for low-income households who have struggled to make bill payments before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is administered by the Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee (MAAC). Payments are made directly to the Otay Water District. For more information and to complete the eligibility form, visit maacproject.org/lihwap, call (619) 349-0123, or email water@MAACproject.org.

COMMERCIAL REBATES Businesses Can Save Water Too!

Did you know the District offers rebates on plumbing fixtures, food equipment, and landscaping devices for commercial customers? Businesses can also upgrade their outdoor areas with drought-tolerant landscapes for a rebate of at least $2 per square foot. REMINDER: it is prohibited to use potable water to irrigate nonfunctional turf on commercial, industrial, and institutional properties. For more prohibited actions and to see exceptions, visit otaywater.gov/drought. To learn more about commercial and residential rebates, visit otaywater.gov/conservation-programs.
Essential Garden Tools Part II

Gardening time is nearly here! Other parts of the country kick off gardening in spring. In San Diego, our busy times are fall, winter, and early spring while the weather is cool and there’s a chance of rain. Here are my favorite digging, weeding, and utility tools to make your gardening more successful and more enjoyable.

DIGGING TOOLS
My favorite tools for digging planting holes feature heavy-duty, forged steel blades that can be sharpened when they go dull. Sharpening blades is very important. Try digging sandstone, decomposed granite, clay, or any soil with a sharp tool compared to a dull tool. You’ll be amazed at the difference! I prefer wood handles over plastic or metal. Look for a solid wood handle with straight grain. The handle should insert into a long metal shank and be secured by rivets. These are the most important digging tools in my garden shed:

• **Hand trowels**: pick up a hand trowel to see how comfortable it feels. Is it heavy even before you start to dig? It will feel much heavier once filled with wet soil. Is the handle shaped to fit your hand? Don’t accept a handle that is too large — or too small. Long term, the trowel you’ll find yourself using is the one that feels most comfortable. My favorite hand trowel is a weathered, green steel trowel I brought home from England many years ago. Its metal head and long shank are all one piece, with a short wood handle that inserts neatly into the shank and is secured with a rivet. The closest trowel on the US market is this nursery trowel from A.M. Leonard.

• **Shovels**: which shovel is better — round head, pointed head, or flat edge? That depends on the task. Use round/pointed shovels to dig compacted soil and a flat-edge shovel for digging loose soils. Both round and flat shovels are good for scooping and moving mulch and other materials. Small head shovels are ideal for planting one-gallon and five-gallon plants, mixing potting soils, digging out spent vegetable plants, etc. Fit the handle length to your frame so your back isn’t sore after a day in the garden. Since I am petite, I prefer short-handled shovels like the Corona Multi-Purpose Mini Shovel and Ace Little Pal 27 inch Steel Round Utility Shovel. These two inexpensive workhorses last for years. If you have a larger stature, look for “floral shovels,” which have similarly small heads at the end of long handles. Check out Ace steel round floral shovel, AM Leonard Floral Shovel with a straight handle, and Gemplers Floral Shovel.

• **Hori Hori Knife**: I’m not sure how I gardened for so long without a hori hori! “Hori” means “dig” in Japanese, an apt name for this “soil knife” perfect for digging small holes, transplanting, removing dead plants, and removing stubborn, deep-rooted weeds. The best hori hori has a smooth wood handle, steel blade, and sturdy construction. The blades are typically 3-inches wide by 8-inches long, slightly cupped, and shovel-like with serrations along one long side. As with other hand tools, your hori hori should fit your hand comfortably. This traditional hori hori has a carbon steel blade while this one has a stainless steel blade.

WEEDING TOOLS
After the rains start, weed seeds sprout and need to be dealt with right away. So, reach for a weeding tool rather than for a bottle of “stuff” to spray. My favorite weeding tools include:

• **CobraHead Weeder and Cultivator Garden Tools**: they come in two sizes — handheld and long-handled. Both have the same curved head made of tempered steel. Use them to slice through soil and cut weeds off at the base, or to dig out their deep roots. I’ve used these for years.

• **The Nejiri Gama hand-held sickle hoe** is another Japanese tool. This one’s very sharp-edged anvil-like head slices through soil like butter. Several companies make this style weeding tool, which comes in both right and left-handed versions: Garden Tool Co, Nisaku Japan, and others.

• **Hori Hori Knife** – see above.

FOR THE LONG TERM
Don’t penny-pinch. Well-made tools work better and last decades longer than cheaper ones, especially if you regularly wipe them clean and dry, and sharpen when they grow dull. If you tend to forget where you set down your hand tools, take the time to paint the handles or dip them into plasticizer: bright orange or yellow. They will be far easier to keep track of!

For the full version of this story, visit otaywater.gov/waterwise-gardener.

Nan Sterman is a garden expert, author, designer, and educator. Nan leads international garden tours, is the author of several books, and hosts the show A Growing Passion on KPBS TV, waterwisegardener.com
Ganadores del concurso de carteles plasman a través del arte el valor del agua durante la sequía

Cinco estudiantes artistas ganaron el concurso de carteles estudiantiles “El agua es vida” 2022 del Distrito de Agua de Otay por demostrar de manera creativa por qué el agua es un recurso precioso y limitado durante la sequía.

Este programa educativo anual invita a participar a estudiantes de K al 12° grado en el área de servicio del Distrito. A través de este concurso, se invita a los estudiantes a reflexionar sobre la importancia de utilizar el agua con prudencia e ilustrar por qué el agua es vida.

“Debido a los recordatorios diarios sobre la sequía que tenemos en el sur de California se me ocurrió que sería de suma importancia incorporar este tema en el plan de estudios de arte, además, fue muy divertido”, mencionó Elizabeth Cordle, maestra de arte de Hillsdale Middle School. “Como profesora de arte fue muy satisfactorio ver cuán creativos pueden ser los estudiantes”.

Los ganadores fueron seleccionados entre 123 trabajos y recibieron varios premios, y fueron reconocidos durante una reunión de la Junta Directiva del Distrito.

Los ganadores son:
• Primer lugar a nivel preparatoria: Michael Armenion, undécimo grado, Otay Ranch High School
• Primer lugar a nivel secundaria: Khilee Haull, séptimo grado, Hillsdale Middle School
• Segundo lugar a nivel secundaria: Fatima Altai, séptimo grado, Hillsdale Middle School
• Primer lugar a nivel primaria: Angie Zhong, sexto grado, Thurgood Marshall Elementary School
• Segundo lugar a nivel primaria: Christian-Kealoha Rogacion, quinto grado, Thurgood Marshall Elementary School

Además, el Distrito sometió los carteles ganadores al concurso anual de carteles estudiantiles del Distrito Metropolitano de Agua del Sur de California (MWD, por sus siglas en inglés) para ser incluidos en su calendario “El agua es vida”. Este año, el MWD seleccionó a dos ganadores, Khilee Haull y Christian-Kealoha Rogacion para representar a Otay en el calendario.

“Nos da mucho orgullo ver a una generación joven de estudiantes compartir su conocimiento sobre la administración y gestión del agua en este momento tan importante”, mencionó Eileen Salmeron, asistente de comunicaciones y coordinadora del concurso. “Ahora que California enfrenta una sequía, esperamos que los estudiantes y sus familias tengan conocimiento sobre los pequeños cambios que se pueden hacer en el hogar o en la escuela sobre conservación de agua los cuales pueden hacer una gran diferencia en el robustecimiento de nuestra resiliencia ante la sequía”.

Para ver todos los carteles ganadores, por favor visite otaywater.gov/ganadores-concurso-carteles-2022.