

pipeline



FALL 2012

A NEWSLETTER FOR CUSTOMERS OF THE OTAY WATER DISTRICT



Water: One of the Best Values Around

In our rushed daily lives, we often take for granted a reliable supply of safe, clean water. We do so because water service is so reliable. We also rarely see the complex network of pipes or pump stations that bring water to our homes and businesses because they are underground and housed in nondescript structures on hilltops or on a roadside. Still, it doesn't matter if we use very little water or thousands of gallons each day, that equipment must be managed, operated, maintained and, in time, replaced. Water agencies like the Otay Water District also have infrastructure bond obligations that must be paid regardless of the amount of water that customers use. And when the Santa Ana winds start to blow, don't forget about the role water plays in firefighting.

The safety of our water supply is a factor in its cost as well. Water is the most tested and monitored substances we consume. As a result of water-source protection measures, advanced treatment techniques and lab analysis, water-borne diseases have all but vanished in America. With technological advancements, the level of monitoring has also advanced. We've gone from measuring some constituents in parts per million to parts per trillion; an amount equal to one drop of water in 26 Olympic-size swimming pools.

A great deal of energy is also required to move and treat water. In fact, upwards of 20 percent of the state of California's electrical supply can be used for water purposes on a day of peak demand. Just like you, we get a power bill and have limited control over those costs.

Also, the water industry must hire, train and retain highly qualified personnel to



The Best Deal Around

On average, a gallon of tap water in the San Diego region costs less than two-thirds of a cent per gallon. When compared with the cost of other products we use every day, tap water is the best deal around.

A Gallon of TAP WATER

\$0.0065

A Gallon of



\$16.00

A Gallon of



\$6.75

A Gallon of



\$3.77

A Gallon of



\$3.29

Image courtesy of the San Diego County Water Authority

maintain and operate these critical systems. Most positions require state certifications that must be kept current through ongoing training. The quality of the water we consume lies in very capable hands.

Becoming more water-efficient is in everyone's best interest. The water we save this year may be insurance against some future drought. Newer appliances and water-saving devices are one way to save; changes in behavior and landscaping

choices are others. While no one is happy with the prospect of rising cost of water, keep in mind that for all it does, for drinking, cooking, cleaning, sanitation, recreation, irrigation and more – water is critical to the quality of life we enjoy. It remains one of the best values around and the Otay Water District is dedicated to keeping it that way.

The District and Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) contributed to this article.



Fall is the Time for Planting

Can you hear it? Your garden is calling, "Plant me! Plant me!" "Plant now?" You respond, "in fall?" Yes, plant now. Fall through early spring are prime planting time for our gardens. Here's why.

Nurseries are overflowing with beautiful low water plants, especially for plants native to California, Australia, South Africa, the Mediterranean, and Chile. These plants make up the Mediterranean plant palette and nearly all perfectly adapted to our dry climate.

We plant now because the air is cooler and more humid than in spring or summer (except when the Santa Ana winds blow). These milder conditions reduce heat stress that can weaken or kill new plants going into the ground.

While the air is cool, the soil is still warm enough to support new root growth, the first order of business for all newly planted plants. Those roots develop through fall and winter. Come March, when the air begins to warm again, the plants will have enough new roots to support their making new branches, leaves, and flowers.

Before you shop, do some planning.

Measure the spaces you want to plant and make a drawing to show where new plants will go. Then, match the sizes of plants to the sizes of the spaces. If you put too many plants in too small a space, they eventually grow into and over each other. Then, you will have to decide whether to remove some plants (in gardening terms, we call this "editing"), or whether to deal with constant pruning to keep the overcrowded plants within bounds. Editing plants might make you wonder whether you wasted money on too many plants (you did); the other decision means more maintenance than you might have wanted and plants that won't achieve their full size and beauty. The best way to avoid this all-to-common dilemma is by choosing the right size plants and spacing them appropriately from the start.

Assess the growing conditions of your planting areas. Are they sunny, part sun, part shade, or shade? Sand, clay, or in-between? Will the plants be irrigated or will you expect them to survive on what Mother Nature provides?

Remember that no plants are drought tolerant the moment they are planted. It takes a year or two until their roots are established well enough to withstand reduced irrigation or even no irrigation. In the meantime, keep rootballs damp but not wet. Too wet soil can literally drown roots.

Examine your irrigation system. If you haven't already converted your garden to in-line drip, do it now, before you plant. In-line drip delivers water to the soil, exactly where the

plants need it. Water releases slowly, absorbing into the soil rather than running off into the gutter. Compared to overhead spray, in-line drip also eliminates problems with water lost to evaporation, and with leaky, misdirected, and broken sprinkler heads. Because water use is typically cut in half (or more), your bank account will thank you too.

Another alternative is to select plants that can eventually survive on rainfall and avoiding the expense of installing an irrigation system by using a product called DriWater. DriWater is a gel made from cellulose (plant fibers) and water. It comes in tubes that you set next to the root ball in the planting hole. Over time, natural soil enzymes digest the gel, releasing the water into the rootball. In the end, the gel totally dissipates into the soil, leaving no residue.



DriWater is used extensively in forestry and revegetation projects where plants won't ever be irrigated. It is a simple and clever way to keep rootballs moist through that critical establishment period.

Beware acrylic polymer products on the market that also hold water. These plastic materials are non-renewable, don't release water as well, and they never decompose.

With the irrigation done and the new plants happily in the ground, blanket the bare soil with a three-inch thick layer of aged mulch. Mulch will insulate the soil from water loss, inhibit weed growth, and add organic matter to the soil.

Your last task is to take some photographs of the new plantings. File them away somewhere easy to find, then pull them out in late spring. You will be amazed at how much the plants have grown and how beautiful they look, all thanks to your fall planting.

The product endorsements in this article are the author's and does not represent the District, its employees or its management.

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OTAY WATER DISTRICT - Board of Directors

The Board of Directors meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 3:30 pm in the Board meeting room. The public is encouraged to attend at 2554 Sweetwater Spring Blvd., Spring Valley, CA.

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