Let’s Talk Water
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In Lake Oswego, the water we use to drink and bathe in is the same water we use to flush our toilets, wash our cars and water our lawns. While our landscapes do not require that same high level of treatment for their water needs, currently we have no other options. I’m frequently asked about capturing or harvesting water for use in the landscape. While that sounds good to the ear, the investment required to capture and store enough water to use on our landscape is a bit daunting - a 40 by 50 foot lawn would require storing around 25,000 gallons of water to make it through the summer. For most folks, the cost to install a system with that storage capacity would be prohibitive, plus I doubt most people would want a storage tank 20 feet in diameter and 11 feet high in our yards.

Another idea frequently bandied about is using graywater (waste water other than sewage. i.e. baths, showers and sinks). Typically, a household will generate less than 400 gallons per week of graywater. So for that same chunk of lawn, a household would need about three weeks’ worth of graywater to give it what it needs weekly. Permitting requirements, plumbing modifications and potential hazards may make it impractical as well.

Using barrels to harvest rain to water your garden or your container plantings can be an easy and fun way to offset some of your water use. So can using water discharged from your washing machine to water non-edible plants and can be an easy and fun way to offset some of your water use. So can using water discharged from your washing machine to water non-edible plants and

Yard Care Tips For Healthy Watersheds

Lake Oswego loves plants – just look around you! We also love our streams, even when they’re a little hard to find, and we love Oswego Lake. So what can we do to have our loves coexist peacefully? Here are three hints:

1. Garden with native plants. Find ones that are well adapted to the light and moisture conditions in your yard. You can get help with native plants from several sources:
   - The city-supported Backyard Habitat Certification program provides hands-on guidance: www.ci.oswego.or.us/planning/backyard-habitat-certification-program
   - Hands-on help from urban conservationists at West Multnomah and Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District (www.wmswcd.org and www.conservationdistrict.org, respectively; call the one for your county)
   - Native plant resources from the East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (emswcd.org/native-plants) and native plant guides and garden designs from King County (https://green2.kingcounty.gov/gardening/index.aspx)
   - Multiple native plant sales in the region, commonly held between October and April. We try to announce them on the City’s Facebook page as they come up.

2. Use only surface water-smart products in your yard.
3. Be careful with yard/outdoor chemicals. Buy, use, and dispose of them safely. For more details, see the City’s Yard and Garden Care page: www.ci.oswego.or.us/publicworks/yard-and-garden-care.

Try to avoid using yard chemicals with:
- Phosphorus: a nutrient that contributes to algal growth in the lake
- Copper or zinc: common for moss control but toxic to fish
- Neonicotinoid insecticides: harmful to bees and other pollinators; see the specific list of product names at http://www.xerces.org/neonicotinoids-and-bees/
- Bifenthrin and fipronil: long-lasting insecticides found in our 2013 stream sampling, they’re toxic to aquatic insects that are important food sources for fish, birds, and amphibians.
Water Audits Available to LO Businesses & Residents

Audits continue to be one of the best ways to help gain control of your summertime water usage. On average, customers who have had audits and have taken advantage of the many incentives available have seen reductions in water use of 25% or more.

This year, let the City help you make some changes to your water usage habits. To schedule your audit, call Kevin McCaleb, Water Conservation Specialist, at 503-675-3747.

Hanging Cucumbers

Continuing our edible garden theme, let’s talk about cucumbers. One of my personal favorites, yet also one of the most troublesome, second only to zucchini and melons in the amount of room they take up in the garden. Add to that the slugs seem to love them and you have a perplexing dilemma for a gardener like myself. I manage every year to get in one good cucumber plant and diligently stand by, salting in hand, to eradicate in pesky shell-less snail that should venture near. Limited space gardeners like myself can use containers to help mitigate these issues. The cucumbers grown in containers tend to be more consistent in appearance and are much less likely to be affected by pests. Use cultivars labeled as “compact” or “dwarf” for best results.

Toilet and Urinal Rebates

On July 1, the City will be changing its toilet and urinal rebate program. To maximize conservation, rebates will only be offered for EPA “WaterSense” rated toilets. These models have been tested by the EPA and have been proven to provide acceptable performance at 1.28 Gallons per flush or less. Qualifying urinals can be substituted if requested. In addition, to be consistent with other water providers in our region, we will be increasing the amount per rebate to $100 for each toilet (limit two per account). The program will continue to be offered to commercial and residential customers.

For more information, visit www.lakeoswego.city/publicworks/water-conservation-program or call Kevin at 503-675-3747.