

splash

Spring, 2005

County of Los Angeles
Waterworks Districts' Quarterly Newsletter

Xeriscaping: Gardening in a Dry Climate

Will you be changing the landscaping at your home this spring or maybe just selecting new plants for your yard? This year, why not consider xeriscaping your yard? "What's xeriscaping?" you might ask. Xeriscaping is a term used to describe landscaping that intentionally conserves resources, especially water, and can include using native or drought tolerant plants, or using alternatives to irrigation dependent turf and vegetation.



Poppies are native to California and adapt well in local gardens

For many reasons, it is cheaper and wiser to landscape with native plants. Typically little soil preparation is necessary in order to get native plants established. Because the climate in California is dry, once the plants have taken root they do not require significant attention such as fertilizing and cultivating. Pruning and trimming maintenance is also much lower with native plants. It is interesting to note that our landfills are composed of nearly 20% trimmings from hybrid non-native plants, so planting with native plants will help reduce waste. Irrigation needs are greatly reduced when the garden is filled with native California plants which will significantly reduce your water bill.

You may even consider removing or not planting sections of turf in your yard. Try only planting turf where it will be used for playing.



California fuchsia is another choice for Xeriscaping

Otherwise, turf is better to do without because it takes time to mow each week and is the highest water using plant for our climate.

Remember, gardens can be designed to enhance property values, attract wildlife, save energy, conserve water and be a great source of pride, enjoyment and value. For more information on xeriscaping and using native plants, please visit www.bewaterwise.com.

Word Scramble

FIRUQAE

MUPP

TAVEIN

NALTSP

INOERSONCTVA

UORNDGETAWR

RYD NALSTP

CIRTSISTD

PACERISXE

Answers: XERISCAPE, DISTRICTS, DRY PLANTS, GROUNDWATER, CONSERVATION, NATIVE PLANTS, PUMP, AQUIFER

Q & A

What is the best time to water my lawn?

The best time for watering is in the early morning. The cooler temperature reduces the amount of evaporation.

How can I turn off the water in case of a leak or emergency?

Most all water meters are equipped with a customer valve that can be used to turn off the water supply at the meter. The customer valve is located on the house side of the meter and, when turned off, will stop the water supply to the property.



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Mission: - To enrich lives through effective and caring service.

Questions or Comments?
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We're on the web!
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Keeping our Wells Pumping Strong

Well maintenance is one program that Los Angeles County Waterworks Districts' are working on behind the scenes to ensure our water systems operate efficiently while providing reliable and sufficient water supplies for homes and businesses. Our Well Maintenance and Efficiency Program is an ongoing effort by staff to evaluate and assure a dependable supply of groundwater from all of the Districts' wells. Wells constructed for municipal water supply are typically very deep and if maintained properly can function for many decades. The Districts design, build and operate wells that range in depth from several hundred feet to over a 1000-ft. Once a well has been constructed and put into operation, maintenance and monitoring begins.

Everyone knows that the better you take care of an asset, the longer it will last. Our water wells and equipment used to extract groundwater require regular maintenance such as changing the oil in the motors, painting exterior well facilities, brushing and acidifying the well screens, sediment cleanout and installation of new meter reading equipment. The well water we use is a valuable resource and critical

supply especially in times of high demand during the summer. During the summer months, our wells can operate almost non-stop, while during the winter months we reduce operation of our wells to utilize available imported water. During the winter months, the District performs the necessary maintenance to ensure the wells operate as efficiently as possible during the summer.

Additionally, every month our staff visit each well site to take readings of different operational criteria. These readings help us know how much water a well is producing, how much electricity the well is using and how the well's current performance compares to its original performance. This provides the necessary information for us to anticipate any maintenance that may need to be performed during the winter and helps us know when to ini-



Wellhead with the storage tanks in the background

tiate further investigation into problems that may arise. Along with the readings, wells are periodically videotaped to identify indications of failures. Special cameras are lowered into the wells to provide a visual inspection. A video will typically show the condition of the casing and screen. Ground water contains minerals that can react with the casings and screens. This reaction causes buildup of encrustations on the well screens which restricts the amount of water our wells can produce. In

order to unclog the screens, chemicals are applied to the inside of the wells that clean the screens. Then, we pump the well to waste until the chemicals used to clean it are no longer detected in the water.

There are about 40 wells supplying groundwater to our customers. The majority of the wells are in the Antelope Valley. Even though our wells cannot supply the entire water demand for the Districts, they do provide close to 25% of the Districts' water supply during a normal year. Keeping the wells running is a big part of our water management objectives, and with dedicated staff in the office and the field, the Districts continue getting the job done behind the scenes.



Chlorination System



Electrical system being tested at a pump station.

