

Lighten up on drought shame and give Mark your water-saving ideas

EARTH LOG By Mark Grossi
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You've probably seen brown lawns in your neighborhood. You've heard friends talk about training their kids to shut off water while they're brushing teeth.

Now, I'm starting to hear this question: "How big is your bucket?"

It's about people capturing shower warm-up water for use in other ways. Like many water-saving ideas, it's not new. The question with this idea has always been: How do you lug this water outside to a plant or garden?

Honestly, I don't care what kind of bucket you use or how old-fashioned your approach is. I'm just interested in your ideas about saving water, so I can pass them along here.

For Bee photographer John Walker and other folks who have figured this out, the bucket idea evolved into something like this:

Walker moves his shower bucket underneath the bathroom vanity where he has installed a pipe with a small water circulation pump. He flips on the pump switch to send the water into a plastic pipe.

The pipe goes through a carefully drilled hole in his wall to a container outside. He uses the water on his tomatoes, bell peppers and Brussels sprouts.

As I said, he isn't the only one who had [this idea](#) about collecting shower water. Another Bee photographer, Craig Kohlruss, documented this same idea [in Tuesday's Bee](#), but the innovation was just a little different from John Walker's approach, which you can watch online in a fascinating video.

The point is that not everyone knows about it. So, why not tell me about this stuff, and I can write about it here?

Let's back up a few steps. I'm aware that the whole subject of drought has become an even more sensitive subject after four years of below-average precipitation. In the federal weather data for Fresno, I don't see epic dry winters back-to-back like the ones we've just had.

I understand the frustration and anger at government agencies, industries and even your own neighbors. But this isn't about drought shame and blame. I have written about the drought [from that angle](#). I will again. I'm just not going there in this space today.

Why should we talk more about [saving water](#)? [Clovis](#) gave me [a good answer in April](#).

In response to the state's demand for a 36% reduction from the city, officials announced plans for fining customers if they miss that target. The fine — based on meter readings — is supposed to show up on bills.

I've been told by many water experts that it would help a lot if people would just stick to their legally allowed days and times for outdoor watering. In [Fresno](#), that means nobody waters on Monday, Thursday or Friday. And nobody waters between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.

There are other things you've heard over and over, too.

Fix your leaking toilet and sprinkler system. Take shorter showers. Don't rinse your dishes before putting them in the dishwasher. Buy water-saving washing machines. Replace your lawn with drought-tolerant plants or synthetic turf. Use drip irrigation and micro sprayers instead of conventional sprinklers.

I'm interested in other ideas or innovations that folks in your circles are discussing. Email me, and readers will hear about them here.

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