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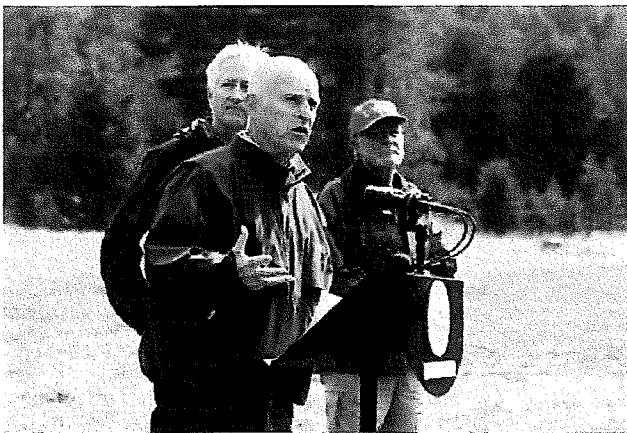
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California moves to kill the lawn, save the water during drought

By Ellen Knickmeyer And Gillian Flaccus
Associated Press
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California Gov. Jerry Brown, center, answers a question concerning the executive order he signed that imposes mandatory water restrictions at Echo Summit, Calif., Wednesday, April 1, 2015. Brown stands with Mark Cowin, left, Director of the California Department of Water Resources and Frank Gehrke, chief of the

Rich Pedroncelli, Associated Press

Summary

Gary Whitlock watched water run down to the sidewalk as gardeners hosed down a bed of marigolds outside an Orange County office building and questioned if California's latest attempt to curb water use would be any more successful than previous ones in the drought-stricken state.

LONG BEACH, Calif. — What's it going to take to get people to use a lot less water in drought-stricken California, the Technicolor landscape of lush yards, emerald golf courses and aquamarine swimming pools?

The state may be about to find out as it imposes the first mandatory water-use restrictions in California history later this year.

Gov. Jerry Brown on Wednesday ordered a 25 percent overall cutback in water use by cities and towns, but not farms, in the most sweeping drought measures ever undertaken by the nation's most populous state.

The crackdown comes as California moves toward its fourth summer of drought with no relief in sight. Record low snowfall over the winter has left the state of nearly 40 million people with a year's worth of water in its reservoirs, and dwindling groundwater for wells.

On Thursday, retired secretary Brenda Johnson stood in the doorway of her Sacramento home contemplating her lovingly tended lawn and azalea bushes. Johnson did not love the idea of brown as the new green.

"With the money I put into it, I don't want it to go dry," said Johnson, who got a warning letter from the city last year for watering her front yard on the wrong day.

"I don't want a dead lawn," she said. "But change is hard, and you do adjust."

In Southern California's sunbathed city of Long Beach, homeowner Katherine Rusconi stood among the bright red, pink and yellow succulents and desert plants that make up her front yard, basking in the knowledge of being ahead of the game.

The city of Long Beach gave her \$3,000 in rebates for ripping out her own lawn less than two years ago. Some of her neighbors have since followed her lead, making the block a showpiece of water-saving, wildlife-friendly yards.

"You know, this is a desert climate. This should have been in place for some time," Rusconi said.

Brown's move to get tough on water use came after his push for voluntary conservation yielded mixed results. Asked by Brown in January 2014 to cut their water consumption by 20 percent, Californians achieved only about half that.

Affluent Southern California communities with lots of landscaping on automatic timers were some of the worst offenders, topping 300 gallons of water per person a day compared with 70 gallons for some San Francisco Bay Area communities.

State water officials will now draw up the emergency regulations to carry out the governor's order and hope to have them ready for enactment in May, said George Kostyrko, spokesman for the state Water Resources Control Board.

The governor's order requires the roughly 400 water agencies around the state to cut water use by one-quarter from the 2013 level.

Homeowners will get rebates for replacing lawns with greenery more suited to the semi-arid state and for installing more water-thrifty appliances and plumbing fixtures. The state also will press water agencies to impose higher, graduated rates to discourage water guzzling.

Cemeteries, golf courses and business headquarters must cut back significantly on watering the grass and shrubs. And new homes will not be allowed to use drinking water for irrigation unless they have water-stingy drip systems.

Homeowners and water districts that violate the rules will be subject to fines, but many of the enforcement details have yet to be worked out.

State water officials stress it's the lush, green blades of grass they are after.

"When it is all said and done, what we are asking is that they cut back dramatically on their outdoor watering," Kostyrko said.

Californians should water enough to save their trees, water board head Felicia Marcus said, but should let their lawns go the way of all mortal things.

In Sacramento, Goud Chetan has already scalped his front lawn, leaving it bare dirt Thursday. Chetan said he will lay down gravel and shrubs instead, though not necessarily to be a good citizen during the drought.

"Really it's about the water bill and saving money," Chetan said.

Some water experts and economists are dubious the crackdown will succeed.

Californians will embrace saving water if they feel everyone is doing the same, water experts said. Brown's cutback order, however, exempts agriculture, which consumes 80 percent of all the water that Californians use.

"In times of scarcity, human nature is to do one's share if you think others are making similar sacrifices," said Jonas Minton, a former senior state water official, now an adviser to the California-based Planning and Conservation League policy group. "When it appears others are taking more than their share, it can be reduced to every person for themselves."

But farmers have already done their part, fallowing land and paying more for water, said Shawn Stevenson, a farmer in California's agricultural heartland, the Central Valley.

Stevenson said he had to rip out nearly half his almond, pistachio and citrus trees.

"It's nice to know that some of our fellow state residents are going to share in the pain," he said. "Why they didn't do it last year, I don't know."

Associated Press writer Scott Smith contributed to this article from Fresno and Fenit Nirappil contributed from Sacramento. Ellen Knickmeyer reported from San Francisco.

U.S. (/TOPICS/TOPIC/CATEGORIES/US.HTML)

DAVID MCNEW / GETTY IMAGES

Trees are latest victims of California's four-year drought

Cutbacks in lawn watering are killing trees in communities across the state

July 6, 2015 5:15AM ET

by Haya El Nasser (/profiles/e/haya-el-nasser.html) - @hayaelna (<http://www.twitter.com/hayaelna>)

LOS ANGELES — Calif. Gov. Jerry Brown issued a stern warning when he ordered unprecedented 25 percent cuts in water use from every one of the state's 400 urban water suppliers in April: "People should realize we are in a new era. The idea of your nice little green lawn getting watered every day, those days are past."

Since then, green lawns have turned brown or been ripped out to heed the governor's conservation mandate (<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/4/10/california-water-agencies-scrambling-to-cut-water-use-by-25-percent.html>) and state officials announced Wednesday that residential water use this May was down an impressive 29 percent from May 2013.

The good news is that conservation goals are being met. The bad news is that there are millions of unintended victims of this civic allegiance: Trees.

Nature has already killed an estimated 12 million trees (<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-trees-dying-california-drought-20150505-story.html>) in California's forests since the drought began four years ago — most falling victim to an outbreak of the bark beetle pests that attack trees weakened by drought.

Now, trees in city parks, along boulevards and in residential neighborhoods are dying because homeowners, businesses and municipalities have stopped watering.

"The reaction was to turn off irrigation in many locations," said John Melvin, urban forester at the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. "If you do that, you lose a long-lived community asset. A tree is not something that can be easily replaced."

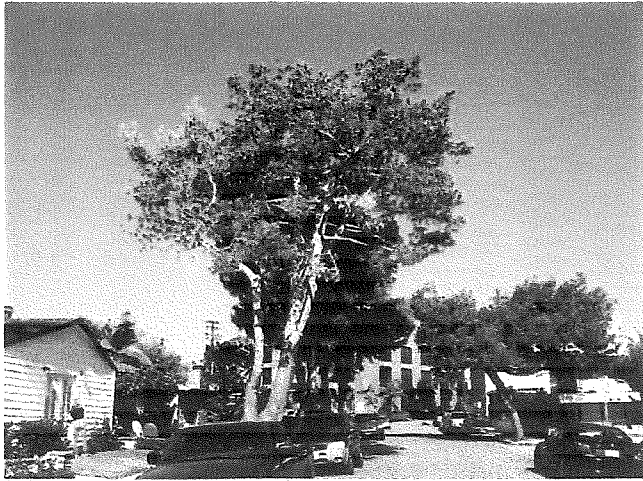
State agencies and non-profit organizations are joining forces to launch a new campaign to let people know that they can and should water their trees, at least once in a while. By the end of this month, the message on highway electronic signs reminding people to save water during the worst drought in more than a thousand years will be tweaked. The new dictum: Save water, save trees.

"It's OK to appropriately water trees (http://calfire.ca.gov/downloads/CaUFC_Trees_and_Drought.pdf)," Melvin said.

Homeowners are being warned that dying trees can be a safety hazard and that keeping them alive will cost less than removing them.

“Everyone’s concerned about what they’re seeing but no one has any real control over what can be done,” said Nancy Hughes, executive director of the California Urban Forests Council, who said some people are uprooting trees to abide by water conservation rules. “In many cities, the trees are watered when the lawns are watered.”

Now, urban landowners — including the Mormon temple on Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles — have decided to let their lawns go brown to save water, leaving trees thirsty in the process. Cities have stopped watering medians on parkways.



This dying Aleppo pine in Newport Beach was removed by the city because of the drought. City of Newport Beach

In Orange County’s Newport beach, the city has had to increase its tree budget by \$400,000 to remove dying trees and plant new, more drought-resistant ones.

“Unfortunately, the less-tolerant specimens like pines are suffering greatly because they require a lot of water intake,” said John Conway, city arborist. “We’re removing them as they die ... there won’t be any pines left.”

About a quarter of the city’s 34,000 trees are pines, trees that thrive in cooler coastal counties in northern California. Many were imported in the 1930s and 1940s as more people populated what is essentially a desert.

“Try to envision this area back 200 years ago,” Conway said. “We would not have seen any trees at all except in valleys.”

Because so many of the trees that are dying are species that probably shouldn’t have been planted in California in the first place, communities are learning their lessons and replacing dying trees with native plants.

“With this newfound normal for water, we are evaluating the best of the drought-tolerant and drought-resistant trees,” said Robert Sartain, Santa Clarita city arborist.

The city is postponing planting trees in areas that don’t have landscape irrigation, “which really means, not too many new trees,” Sartain said.

“A tree is not something that can be easily replaced.”

—John Melvin

California state urban forester

This wave of dying trees in California comes on the heels of a two-decade push for the greening of cities. Tree cover in metropolitan areas plummeted in the 80s and 90s. Last decade, cities from Chicago and Charlotte, North Carolina, to Cincinnati and Salem, Oregon, adopted “green infrastructure” strategies, including tough ordinances that require trees in new developments and incentives for landowners to plant them.

Studies by American Forests, a non-profit conservation group, show that trees clean the air by filtering pollutants and producing oxygen. Trees also reduce energy costs by providing shade and cooling the air, a natural way to offset the scorching heat that can be reflected from concrete. They can also soak up rain water rather than letting the precious liquid go down the drain, dragging oil, auto coolants, pesticides and other chemicals that eventually get flushed into rivers.

A recent report by the U.S Department of Agriculture Forest Service (<http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/uesd/uep/documents/20150422CAStreetTrees.pdf>) show that the number of street trees in California have not kept up with population growth. The 9.1 million street trees make up 10 percent to 20 percent of the state’s total urban forest. The report also found that tree density has declined 30 percent since 1988 “as cities added more streets than trees.” Tree density fell from 105.5 trees per mile to 75 trees per mile in that period.

Despite that, the agency estimates that California street trees save the amount of electricity equivalent to what’s required to air condition 530,000 households every year.

But if they die during this drought, many may not be replaced.

That's why the upcoming California save-the-trees campaign will try to educate people to ways they can let their lawns go brown but still save their trees. Water them – not at the base but to the point where the roots extend – and use recycled water.

Another, more expensive, way to bring water to thirsty trees without wasting it on lawns and sidewalks is to install a drip irrigation system that uses less water and targets tree roots.

At the Compton Creek Natural Park in Compton, on the southern end of Los Angeles County, the non-profit Los Angeles Conservation Corps has taken four acres of land owned by the school district and is turning it from junkyard to ecological wonder. Between an elementary school and a senior housing complex, the park landscaping is gently sloped to retain water. Beneath the soil, seven tanks can hold 110,000 gallons of water from runoff. Only native trees, such as oaks and sycamores, were planted along a walking trail and outdoor amphitheater. In stark contrast, one of the fern pines in the concrete schoolyard next door is showing signs of distress and a dying palm tree in an adjoining residential neighborhood towers over the park.

“The solution is to separate your irrigation system,” said Larry Smith, community development director for the LA Conservation Corps. “In Compton, we designed it with a separate system for turf and ground cover.”

Cities such as San Pedro and Pacoima are redesigning their streets to collect rainwater that would normally run down the drain, and redirecting it to trees, he said.

Longtime San Francisco resident Margo Freistadt was stunned when the apple tree she planted in her backyard 23 years ago to celebrate her husband’s recovery from a heart attack didn’t blossom this year for the first time. It’s not that she had stopped watering it but just that she never had to before.

“I didn’t realize it but our tree gets its water from the rain,” said Freistadt, 58, a self-employed and self-described “handyhuman” who does home repairs. “But we’ve had four winters without rain ... I wasn’t even aware it was happening.”

Desperate to save a tree that had become part of family traditions – annual apple-picking and applesauce-making parties – she followed expert advice and soaked the roots. A few blossoms appeared within a week. She knows now to save water without killing her tree. She collects two to three gallons a day from water used to wash vegetables and water that runs in the shower while she waits for it to warm up. All of it goes to douse the tree.

“The tree is alive,” Freistadt said.

EARTH LOG AUGUST 10, 2015

Does landscaping get a bad rap as water waster?

HIGHLIGHTS

Fines, shaming and brown lawns are getting headlines in California

But there's good reason to keep landscape alive, horticulturists say

The brown lawn has become a symbol of conservation



BY MARK GROSSI
mgrossi@fresnobee.com

It's August in a miserable California drought year – water-use crackdowns, fines, lawsuits, shaming and brown lawns. People are getting a little defensive about the manic push to save water.

The defensiveness surfaced last week when two experts from the University of California at Riverside wrote a commentary saying trees, lawns, shrubs and flowers “are under unrelenting attack.” In support of green spaces in cities, they say landscaping is getting a bad rap as a water waster.

Donald R. Hodel, environmental horticulture adviser, and Dennis R. Pittenger, environmental horticulturist in the department of botany and plant sciences, wrote the commentary on natural and psychological benefits of landscaping.

The online reaction to the UC Riverside commentary is also interesting. There are three comments so far. They express strong feelings.

One calls the commentary “the most profound synopsis I have read in a while.”

Another is from someone at the University of California who says the commentary “blind-sided” him: “Do the authors really want for us to start telling people to go ahead and water their lawns in cities with desert climates?”

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DEFINITELY, PROTECT YOUR TREES. AND WE'RE NOT ASKING YOU TO KILL YOUR LAWN – MAYBE LET IT GET A LITTLE GOLDEN. BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE OVER-WATER THEIR LAWNS. FOR THOSE PEOPLE, IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO SAVE WATER BY CUTTING BACK.

FELICIA MARCUS, CHAIRWOMAN OF THE STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

This summer, that kind of response seems inevitable, even though state regulators have not directly ordered people to kill their landscaping. Some people may see no other choice.

Clovis residents, for instance, are being fined if they don't reduce water use by 36% each month. The most logical place to cut water use is for landscaping.

The State Water Resources Control Board issued water cutback orders for California cities, including the big reduction for Clovis. Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the state board, says this is an emergency, but killing landscape is not on the table this summer.

"Definitely, protect your trees," Marcus says. "And we're not asking you to kill your lawn - maybe let it get a little golden. But a lot of people over-water their lawns. For those people, it's a good idea to save water by cutting back."

In Clovis, people are trying to meet the state conservation mandate, leaders say. Conservation is the only option left, since the state has not been able to produce more water storage, says Lisa Koehn, assistant public utilities director in Clovis.

"Water agencies are easy targets for regulation and turf is an easy target for reductions," she says.

Fresno spokesman Mark Standriff says most of the water-reduction in his city has been in landscape irrigation. He says big improvements come when the city talks with people who are watering too often or on the wrong day.

"People are cooperative when you tell them there's a problem and offer to help them," he says.

THE UC RIVERSIDE HORTICULTURAL EXPERTS SAY THE LOSS EXTENDS BEYOND THE GREENERY. IT ALSO INCLUDES OXYGEN PRODUCTION, CARBON SEQUESTRATION, DUST CONTROL, WILDLIFE HABITAT, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING, JOBS AND RECREATION, THEY SAY.

At the same time, nobody is denying this has become the summer of the brown, blond or golden lawn. Drive through a few neighborhoods in most Valley cities, and you will see a few of them. They are a popular symbol of conservation, along with lawn removal and installation of synthetic turf or drought-tolerant plants.

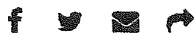
The UC Riverside horticultural experts say the loss extends beyond the greenery. It also includes oxygen production, carbon sequestration, dust control, wildlife habitat, psychological well-being, jobs and recreation, they say.

A few readers have said much the same thing this summer. In late June, I spoke with the Sjobergs, a Fresno couple who use recycled water to keep their yards green.

Jennifer Sjoberg says people need green places to connect with nature. It's a passion with her.

Says Sjoberg: "We use gray water to stay green. I'm a big believer in green spaces for people, especially for children."

Mark Grossi: 559-441-6316, @markgrossi



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Save Our Water and Our Trees!

Why you should save your trees

As you cut back on water use during this historic drought, you may not realize the impact this will have on your landscape trees.

Trees in irrigated landscapes become dependent on regular watering. When watering is reduced – and especially when it's stopped completely – trees will die.

Tree loss is a very costly problem: not only in expensive tree removal, but also in the

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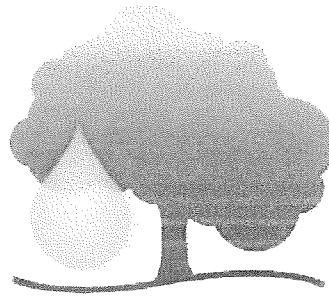
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saveourwater.com/trees

Trees improve air and water quality

Trees provide shade to the landscape and reduce water needs

Trees help keep your home cooler

Trees slow stormwater runoff and help recharge groundwater

Trees reduce soil erosion

Trees add value – sometimes thousands of dollars' worth – to your home and neighborhood

Trees take a long time to grow. Without helping our trees through the drought, we risk losing these benefits. While the drought may not last long, it can harm or kill trees, and it will take 10, 20 or even 50+ years to grow trees and get back the benefits.

How to save your trees

Lawn trees can and must be saved during the drought. What you can do:

1. **Deeply and slowly water mature trees 1 – 2 times per month** with a simple soaker hose or drip system toward the edge of the tree canopy – NOT at the base of the tree. Use a Hose Faucet Timer (found at hardware stores) to prevent overwatering.
2. **Young trees need 5 gallons of water 2 – 4 times per week.** Create a small watering basin with a berm of dirt.
3. **Shower with a bucket** and use that water for your trees as long as it is free of non-biodegradable soaps or shampoos.
4. **Do not over-prune trees during drought.** Too much pruning and drought both stress your trees.
5. **Mulch, Mulch, MULCH!** 4 – 6 inches of mulch helps retain moisture, reducing water needs and protecting your trees.



What else you can do to save water and your trees:

If you prefer, instead of soaker hoses or drip lines, you can put out several 5 gallon buckets with 5 holes drilled into the bottom of the buckets.

Set the buckets under the tree toward the edge of the canopy area and use a hose to fill with water.

This water will then seep slowly into the ground. The number of buckets will depend on your soil type as well as the size and species of tree.

Trees in sandy soils need to be watered more frequently than trees in clay soils.

Convert your spray irrigation system to a drip system so you do not have to depend on the manual hose timer. If you want help with converting your system, consult the manufacturer's manuals and website for your irrigation system or talk to an irrigation specialist.

Remove the lawn or sheet mulch the lawn underneath your tree. Trees actually prefer wood chip mulch and the "duff" created by their own leaves. Learn how here.

Helpful Videos from California ReLeaf, Save Our Water and the U.S. Forest Service

California ReLeaf, Save Our Water, and the U.S. Forest Service have partnered together to create two how-to videos to show California residents how to best care for their trees during this historic drought: [tips on watering mature trees](#) and [watering young trees](#).

For more information, check out the [Trees and Drought Information Flyer](#) and [FAQs](#).

This information is brought to you with the support of the following organizations: California ReLeaf, California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection — Urban Forestry Division, California Department of Water Resources, California Urban Forests Council, Canopy, Davey Tree Expert Company, Friends of the Urban Forest, Governor's Office of Planning & Research, Inland Empire Urban Forest Council, Local Government Commission, Oracle Oak Nursery, Sacramento Tree Foundation, TreePeople, University of California Cooperative Extension, Urban & Community Forestry, USDA Forest Service, Urban Tree Foundation, Western Chapter International Society of Arboriculture (WCISA) and West Coast Arborists.

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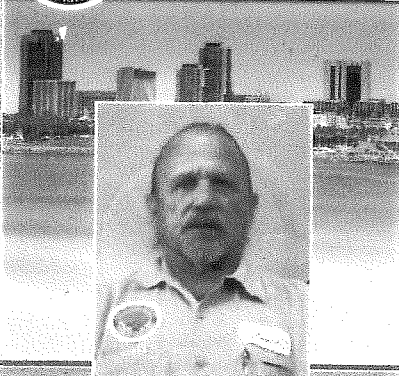
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