

3-22-77
Reactor

By Paul Azevedo



When my grandfather faced the fact of a perennial water shortage on his Sonoma county ranch, he built a rockwalled cave to hold the production of a small spring and save the trickle. That's where I learned that the less water you have, the more important it is to save what there is.

Water is not a new problem. The laws that are used in California water disputes go back to legal developments in Spain 800 to 1000 years ago.

Marin county residents are now learning first hand the value of the lesson my grandfather taught me by example.

THEY ARE cutting their water consumption to less than half. If they had dammed the water that was previously allowed to flow out to sea, they would not have to scrounge so hard these days.

No matter. They are now leading the battle. For example, the Terra Linda News has come out with a whole section devoted to saving water.

Maybe you can use some of their tips, too. In your garden, use lots more humus. It saves water in the forest, and it can in your garden. Mulch with leaves, lawn clippings, plastic, or even this newspaper, appropriately chopped. For more on mulch and humus, look through back issues of "Organic Gardening" at the library.

WEED OUT weeds. Mulch helps here, too. Weeds use up moisture that you want to save. Thin, don't prune. Pruning encourages new growth which you don't want now. Don't fertilize. This will also cut down on water-grabbing new growth.

Water heavily but infrequently. Native shrubs like Ceanothus will survive with little water.

SAVE YOUR "grey" water. That's the water you shave with, bathtub water, kitchen sink water. It's good for flushing the toilet. You are also cutting down on the amount of water that the city has to clean at the sewer plant. If everyone flushed the toilet with a bucket of wash water it might even lower our sewer fee. I haven't spent my tax savings yet, however.

You can also use bathroom grey water or kitchen rinse water to water trees and some plants. Call the county farm adviser at 726-9059 for more advice.

When you store water, do it safely. Avoid a container if it has contained toxic materials.

MARINITES are making and selling devices that use the bathroom drain system to flush toilets with recycled water. They are selling controlled flow shower heads, shower flow head restrictors, home water distillers, aerators, and water saver toilets.

If this drought lasts as long as the Mesa Verde, Colo. drought of 1276 to 1300 A.D. (24 years) we may have to learn more drastic ways to save water.