

Water Matters

December 2023 - March 2024

Cooler, rainy weather is here, but the drought is far from over. Historically, Texas is prone to extended periods of drought eased by flooding events. In fact, the last 20 years have been dominated by “abnormal dryness,” but in this same timeframe, the Texas Hill Country’s population has also doubled. It’s becoming increasingly important that when we do get rain, we hold onto the supplied water for as long as possible because it’s never guaranteed when the next rainfall event will occur.

Finding Alternative Water Sources for Irrigation

Change is all around us. It’s inevitable. Things we once took for granted, set to operate on autopilot, need to be routinely reassessed. This is how progress is made (for better or for worse). But you can’t make smarter choices without first being educated on the options and then taking time to sift through them before implementing what makes the most sense for you. This column is just one of the ways that we, as a steward of water resources, aim to change the way Central Texans use and think about water to help reduce demand.



THIS MEANS THE WATER THAT FLOWS INTO YOUR TOILET OR OUT TO YOUR LAWN IS JUST AS CLEAN AS THE WATER SUPPLIED TO YOUR KITCHEN SINK OR SHOWER. BECAUSE NOT ALL HOUSEHOLD USES OF WATER BENEFIT FROM THIS LEVEL OF SANITIZATION, ALTERNATIVE WATER SOURCES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.

With about 60 percent of an average household’s water consumption being attributed to use outdoors, and much of that being unnecessarily wasted, we spend a lot of time educating about more efficient irrigation practices. This starts with reassessing the water source.

Potable water is the technical term for the water supplied to homes and businesses through a complex underground system of pipes and storage tanks maintained by a public water provider. It comes from a natural water source (most often surface water, such as a lake, or groundwater) and is tested and treated by a team of trained professionals at a sophisticated water treatment facility to levels that meet state and federal standards meant for human consumption. This means the water that flows into your toilet or out to your lawn is just as clean as the water supplied to your kitchen

sink or shower. Because not all household uses of water benefit from this level of sanitization, alternative water sources should be considered. For outdoor watering, non-potable water sources are abundant, but require proper capture, storage, and distribution. Consider:

GRAY WATER

At least 50 percent of indoor water use produces a sustainable resource called “graywater”. By altering a home’s plumbing or using a bucket to capture graywater from handbasins, washing machines, showers, and baths, a home is producing its own non-potable water source. Since your household’s hygiene and cleaning product use impacts the makeup of the graywater and its distribution into the environment, like other non-potable water sources, it is not

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recommended for use on edible plants and is best dispersed subsurface.

AIR CONDITIONING CONDENSATE

With high temperatures guaranteed during the long summer months, a home's air conditioning condensate offers, on average, about five to ten gallons of water per day if collected for reuse. In most cases, it's essentially distilled water with low mineral and chemical content, but may contain some bacteria so is recommended for use in subsurface application.

RAINWATER

Rainwater is best suited for watering plants and harvesting methods have been used for centuries. It can be done passively, by creating landscaping features that slowly convey and disperse the water throughout a yard or garden bed (called a "rain garden"), or actively, through capture using collection basins, such as rain barrels. The downsides are roof runoff is not suggested for use on the leaves of edible plants and this water source is only available with an adequate supply of precipitation.

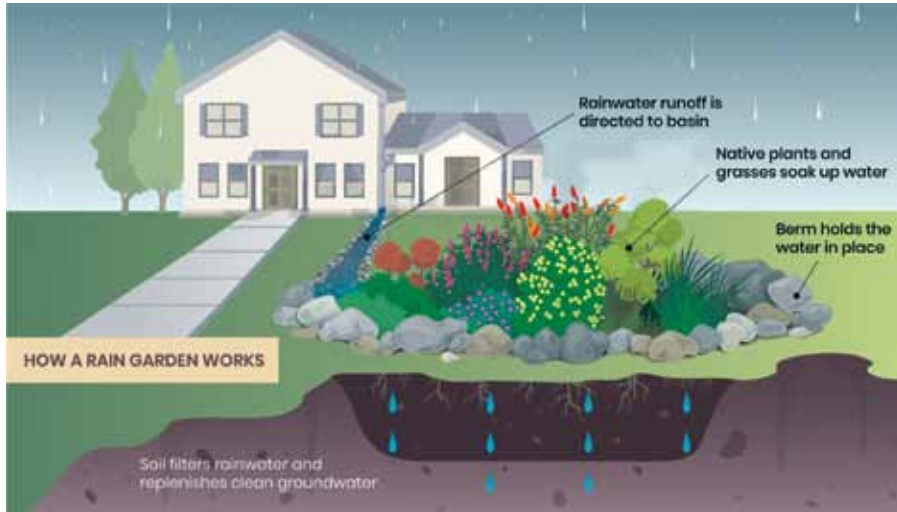


Image Source: Education & Outreach Company

RECYCLED WATER

Reclaimed water, or "recycled water," is produced at a wastewater treatment plant using advanced processing methods that make it safely reusable. Since the 1970s, Lakeway MUD has been a leader in the beneficial reuse of treated wastewater for land application. Rigorously tested and treated to the highest standards, "Type I reclaimed water", is known to be safe and environmentally friendly and therefore permitted for spray application in areas where public contact is likely. This water source is not available everywhere since it requires complex infrastructure, similar to potable water, to distribute and maintain quality, however communities with access to it can significantly decrease the supply demand at their water treatment plants and amount pulled from their natural water source.

We realize each of these upgrades takes time, money, and effort, but as the saying goes, "Rome wasn't built in a day" so while our water shortage problems won't get better without change, small efforts lead to big results over time. Originally published in Lake Travis View, September 2023 •



Bring Your Landscape to Life with Texas Native Plants

When considering our ideal yard, we traditionally emphasize our needs, in terms of use and decorative value. But we'd like to encourage you to consider putting your yard to work in ways that help support our local ecosystem without sacrificing the aesthetic value.

The benefits of native plants include:

INCREASING THE BIODIVERSITY IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

We've done a good job of stripping our traditional suburban neighborhoods by replacing native plants with turf grass and a few trees and shrubs. Report shows that a neighborhood with more native yards supports 29 times more biodiversity (greater and broader variety of species) than non-native areas even when the yards look equally lush.

PROVIDE HABITAT AND FOOD SOURCES FOR WILDLIFE

Native plants provide an important food source as well as habitat for wildlife. Starting with the smallest of insects, the depletion of native plants has a domino effect. For example: studies show there has been about a 30 percent decrease in the population of North American Butterfly and birds since the 1970s.

CONSERVE PRECIOUS WATER RESOURCES

Native plants are used to our rain fall patterns so they don't need as much water as some of the more traditional approaches to landscaping which is becoming increasingly important after the last couple of summers that we've had. A reason for this is their root structure: they have deep root systems, up to 14-feet, to access water deep down – which also helps prevent erosion and runoff.

REDUCE YARD MAINTENANCE

Routine fertilization and pesticide use are a common with traditional yards. Not only can native plants flourish (once established) without much care and maintenance, the use of fertilizers and pesticides is discouraged because of the negative impact these chemicals have on supporting local wildlife.

Excerpt from presentation by Haeley Giambalvo, Native Plant Society of Texas, LMUD Open House, Oct. 2023 •

WHAT'S YOUR WATER SCORE?

LAKEMUDTX.WATERSMART.COM



How to Shut Off Your Water

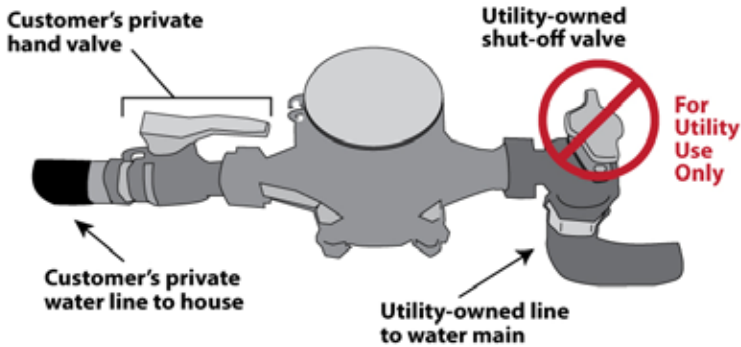


Image Source: Springfield Utility Board

In emergency as well as non-emergency situations, knowing where and how to shut off your home's water supply is as important as knowing how and where to turn-off or reset an electric breaker. Situations in which you may need to shut off your water include everything from reacting quickly to minimize damage caused by a burst pipe to a scheduled replacement of a water heater or repair of a sprinkler system.

For localized water shut offs, turning off your water to the affected appliance should be your initial action. Water lines to faucets and toilets usually have a small valve with a small twist handle or knob which controls the water flow to individual plumbing fixtures. Larger appliances, such as water heaters and washing machines typically have these isolation valves as well. It's a good idea to get in the habit of testing them periodically to be sure they are working properly – to do so, once you turn off the valve, open up your hot and cold lines (if applicable) to release pressure and test if the water is indeed off.

If no interior shutoff valve exists to remedy the situation, locate your customer-owned shutoff valve. This most likely is in or near the water meter which will be close to the end of your property line, near the street in a covered box underground. It will be on the side of the meter closest to your home, with a knob or a ball valve handle requiring a quarter turn to shut off or turn on water. If no customer-owned shutoff valve exists, we suggest having one installed.

There will be a valve next to the meter, but this is the utility-owned shutoff valve and may only be used by an LMUD employee. It is illegal to tamper with, obstruct access to, or remove a water meter, including the utility-owned shutoff valve. If the meter is damaged, the property owner will be responsible for all costs to repair or replace it plus a fine. •

PLUMBING 101 F.O.G. (Fats, Oils, Grease)

CLEAN PIPES ARE GREEN PIPES

Simple steps to keep our water clean, protect public health, and avoid expensive plumbing repairs.

NEVER POUR DOWN THE DRAIN OR TOILET:



Wipes, even "flushable" ones, which can clog municipal and septic wastewater systems since they don't break down like toilet paper.

Fats, oils, and grease (FOG), including cooking oil, pan drippings, gravy, bacon grease, lard, shortening, butter, margarine, salad dressings, mayonnaise, creams, and sauces.

INSTEAD, RECYCLE USED COOKING OIL WHEN POSSIBLE—contact a local cooking oil recycler for locations.



If you must dispose of cooking oil or grease, contact your local household waste program to find out how. As a last resort, seal in a container in the trash.



Use a paper towel to scrape grease from dishes and cookware into the trash (the grease from cloth towels ends up in the wastewater system when you wash them).



Use a sink strainer to catch small pieces of food and compost your food waste whenever possible.



Use environmentally safe cleaning products, such as those with the EPA Safer Choice label.

Image Source: TakeCareofTexas.org

Visit the Lakeway MUD Resource Center, located at the Customer Service Office (1097 Lohmans Crossing) for free water saving items and information.



“ Thank you for all you do to protect our water supply....I, like many others, want to be able to drink clean water and the other things we have come to take for granted. ...Keep doing the great job you're doing. You are appreciated.

- Kathy M.



“ Thank you for being proactive when leaks happen. WOW Lakeway Mud is the BEST.

- Nancy G.

Lakeway Municipal Utility District (LMUD), established in 1972, provides water, wastewater and some reuse services to many of the homes and businesses in the City of Lakeway and a portion of the Village of the Hills.

District Office:
1097 Lohmans Crossing
Lakeway, TX 78734

Phone: (512) 261-6222
CustomerService@lakewaymud.org
www.LakewayMUD.org



Updates

LEAD & COPPER TESTING RESULTS, 2023

Although LMUD's water system does not contain any lead or copper pipes to distribute potable water to customers, lead and copper can enter drinking water primarily through plumbing materials used in individual homeowner's plumbing systems, leaching into the water supply as the pipes corrode. Acting in accordance with the Lead and Copper Rule, under authority of the Safe Drinking Water Act, the

LMUD Water Department had water tested from 30 sample sites during the June 1 to September 30, 2023 collection period. Since the 90th percentile of results are all below action levels, LMUD is not required to take any further action. *Any customers concerned about their lead exposure can have your water tested by a state certified laboratory. You can find one by calling the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791 or visiting www.epa.gov/safewater/labs.*

WINTER AVERAGING IN EFFECT

At LMUD, customer water use is metered, but wastewater charges are averaged. This means that LMUD customers are charged for the amount of water passing through their assigned water meter during any given billing cycle. However, the water flowing out of their home or place of business is not metered, but must also be treated by LMUD, therefore charges for this service must be calculated another way. LMUD determines their customers' charges for wastewater service based on "Winter Averaging" which takes place November through February each year, a time of year when most water use is indoor so gives us a better average of how much of our customers' water use is directed to our wastewater treatment plant.



Winter Averaging Period	Dates New Charges Appear on Water Bills
November 2022 - February 2023	December 2023 - October 2024

WINTER AVERAGING

REDUCE YOUR WATER USE TO SAVE ON YOUR WASTEWATER CHARGES

- NOVEMBER
- DECEMBER
- JANUARY
- FEBRUARY

IT'S BECOMING INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT THAT WHEN WE DO GET RAIN, WE HOLD ONTO THE SUPPLIED WATER FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

"STAGE 3" IRRIGATION RESTRICTIONS REMAIN IN EFFECT

Cooler, rainy weather is here, but the drought is far from over, so one-day per week irrigation remains in effect. Historically, Texas is prone to extended periods of drought eased by flooding events. In fact, the last 20 years have been dominated by "abnormal dryness" according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. But in this same timeframe, the Texas Hill Country's population has also doubled, according to a recent State of the Hill Country report. It's becoming increasingly important that when we do get rain, we hold onto the supplied water for as long as possible because it's never guaranteed when the next rainfall event will occur. *Visit LakewayMUD.org for water conservation tips.*

BOARD APPROVES FY 2023 TAX RATE AND FY 2024 SERVICE RATES

At the September 27, 2023 Special Meeting of the LMUD Board of Directors a tax rate of .0531 per \$100 Assessed Valuation was approved after a public hearing on September 13, 2023. This is a 15.8% decrease from the 2022 rate. Additionally, the Board approved a base rate increase of \$2 for FY 2024 residential water and wastewater rates. Drought Rates took effect on August 15, 2023

and remain in effect with Stage 3 watering restrictions. *For more information, visit lakewaymud.org.*

WATERSMART HELPS CUSTOMERS STAY AWARE OF THEIR WATER USE

Since its launch in November 2022, LMUD's WaterSmart portal has allowed customers access to detailed information about their household water use. Customers are able to track their hourly and daily water usage, self-identify and resolve leaks, understand where their water is being used, compare their water use to similar households, and set water use alerts. *To login or register your account for free, visit lakewaymudtx.watersmart.com.*

WE'RE (STILL) HIRING

Full-Time Maintenance Worker: No experience required, just the ability to work hard with a good attitude, be a team player, and have a willingness to learn a skilled trade. Responsibilities include the construction, repair, and maintenance of LMUD's water distribution and wastewater collection systems. All work is located in Lakeway, Texas. Must have reliable transportation to and from job. *For more information, visit lakewaymud.org and search for "job openings" or visit our District office at 1097 Lohmans Crossing.*