

## Oswald: Conserving water outdoors

[dcourier.com/news/2019/feb/28/oswald-conserving-water-outdoors](http://dcourier.com/news/2019/feb/28/oswald-conserving-water-outdoors)



CWAG members, from left, Michael Adcock, Cheryl Hill, Art Manburg, Delores Manburg and Dianne Oswald work the organization's tent in April 2017 at Earth Day. The orange rain barrel was donated by C-A-L Ranch and the diverter by CWAG. The barrel and diverter CWAG is giving away again are the same as pictured. (Fred Oswald/Courtesy)

Fred Oswald, Special to the Courier

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The quad-city area is pumping water from the aquifer much faster than it is being replenished. The impact of this overdraft includes declining water levels in the aquifer and wells drying up in the western part of Chino Valley and in Williamson Valley.

On average, each Prescott resident uses more than 100 gallons of groundwater per day. Approximately one-third of household water consumed is used on landscaping. Citizens can prolong the life of the aquifer by not using groundwater to irrigate landscapes. The Citizens Water Advocacy Group (CWAG) recommends landscaping with drought-tolerant plants irrigated with rainwater harvested from your roof. Drought-tolerant and native plants are beautiful and they are the plants that belong here.

You can harvest a lot of water from your roof: a 1,000-square-foot roof can collect almost 600 gallons from a 1-inch rainfall and more than 10,000 gallons over a year. Rainwater doesn't contain chlorine, salts or other chemicals, which makes it ideal for watering flowers and vegetable gardens. Using stored rain will lower your water bill. You can supplement harvested rain by saving water used to wash fruits and vegetables. Catch it in a bowl and then pour it on your plants. Using harvested rainwater will lower your water bill.

Rain barrels come in various sizes from about 50 to more than 1,000 gallons. Smaller barrels can be connected to provide more storage. Barrels can be purchased from stores or online. Low-cost barrels can be made from used 50-gallon plastic food-grade drums. Or, rainwater can be collected passively by capturing it in excavated shallow basins at the base of plants and allowing it to percolate into the ground.

You can see large rainwater harvesting systems at the Prescott Station Restaurant on Gurley Street and at the Adult Center of Prescott at 1280 E. Rosser St. The CWAG website, [cwagaz.org](http://cwagaz.org), contains much helpful information including a list of local vendors for low-water-use landscaping and rainwater harvesting.

With a little care, we can save significant water outdoors, protect the aquifer and save money on our water bills.

During the Feb. 26 Prescott City Council presentation on Prescott's water portfolio, consultant Gary Woodard cited landscaping with drought-tolerant plants and irrigating with rainwater harvesting as two important conservation measures. CWAG's March 9 program features Jeff Schalau of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension discussing drought-tolerant plants and Josh Crothers of Prescott Landscape Professionals describing rainwater harvesting. See [cwagaz.org](http://cwagaz.org) for details.

Again this year CWAG will hold a drawing for a rain barrel donated by C-A-L Ranch with a diverter donated by CWAG. Free raffle tickets will be available at our March 9 and April 13 programs and at our April 20 Earth Day booth.

Please send any questions or comments to [info@cwagaz.org](mailto:info@cwagaz.org).

*Fred Oswald is CWAG vice president and a retired NASA engineer.*