

## Column: Saving water outdoors

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 [dcourier.com/news/2020/may/11/column-saving-water-outdoors](https://www.dcourier.com/news/2020/may/11/column-saving-water-outdoors)



The Quad Cities are pumping water from our aquifer several times 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, in the Williamson Valley corridor and northeast of Prescott Valley.

The aquifer also supplies springs and streams, such as the Verde River, which will become dry washes if we continue this excessive pumping. Decades of overdraft from this aquifer has nearly eliminated the once vigorous Del Rio Springs and the upper 7 miles of year-round Verde River flow that originated from the springs.

Already wildlife and human recreation have been negatively impacted.

The average quad-city area resident uses over 100 gallons of water per day. About one-third of this water is used for landscaping, where it evaporates and cannot be reused. This water can be saved by planting drought-tolerant plants and by irrigating with rainwater harvested in barrels or larger tanks. Drought-tolerant and native plants are beautiful and they are the plants that belong here.

You can actively 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 captured rainwater ideal for watering flowers and vegetable gardens. Irrigating with 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.

Rain barrels come in various sizes from about 50 to over 1,000 gallons. Smaller barrels can be connected to provide more storage. Barrels can be purchased from stores or online, or low-cost barrels can be made from used 50-gallon plastic, food-grade drums. You can see a large system at the Prescott Station Grill and Bar on Gurley Street and at the Adult Center on Rosser Street. Rainwater can also be collected passively by capturing it in shallow basins and allowing it to percolate into the ground.

The Rainwater Harvesting page on the Citizens Water Advocacy Group (CWAG) website, [cwagaz.org](http://cwagaz.org), has much helpful information including rainwater harvesting, lists of drought-tolerant plants and local vendors for low-water-use landscaping, including a link for a credit up to \$500 for active and passive rainwater harvesting systems offered by the City of Prescott.

CWAG normally hosts informative programs the second Saturday of most months. Because of COVID-19 these programs have been temporarily suspended. But we have a lot of information on our website, [cwagaz.org](http://cwagaz.org), including videos of past programs. We hope to resume our educational public programs on Aug. 8.

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

*Fred Oswald is CWAG's vice president and a retired NASA engineer. Please send any questions or comments to [info@cwagaz.org](mailto:info@cwagaz.org).*

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