

Otay Water District Turns

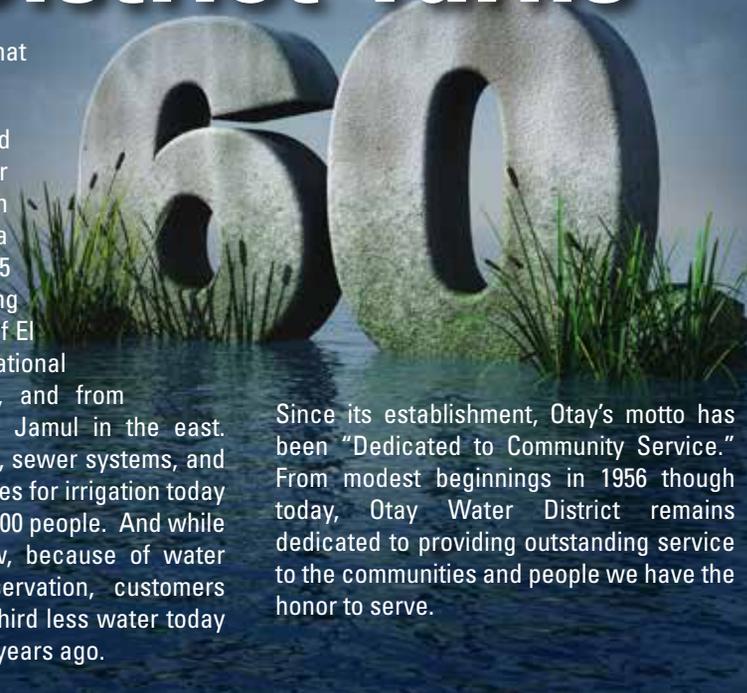
This year, Otay Water District celebrates its 60th anniversary of service to the East County and South Bay. Otay was created by a small group of farmers and landowners in 1956 to serve what was then a sparsely populated area where residents relied on private wells for their water supply.

With drought and water shortages as common then as they are today, and faced with the declining quantity and quality of water from overdrawn local wells, this group petitioned their neighbors to create a public agency that could provide a safe and more reliable water supply. Following a public vote in 1955, the California Legislature established the Otay Municipal Water District in January of 1956. Otay later merged with the neighboring La Presa County Water District in 1969 to create

the public agency that exists today.

Otay's service area had a population of fewer than 1,200 people in 1956. Its service area totaled more than 125 square miles, stretching the southern border of El Cajon to the international border with Mexico, and from I-805 in the west to Jamul in the east. Reliable water supply, sewer systems, and recycled water supplies for irrigation today serve more than 220,000 people. And while we continue to grow, because of water efficiency and conservation, customers of the District use a third less water today than they did just ten years ago.

Since its establishment, Otay's motto has been "Dedicated to Community Service." From modest beginnings in 1956 though today, Otay Water District remains dedicated to providing outstanding service to the communities and people we have the honor to serve.



REPORT WATER THEFT

Help Protect Your Water Supply By Reporting Suspicious Activity

Water theft is a crime. Anyone taking water illegally imposes costs on other paying customers. Consistent with the work we do to provide customers with the highest quality water and the best service at the lowest possible price, Otay works hard to stop water theft.

Water theft can result in significant fines as well as criminal or civil prosecution. As a result of meter tampering incidents, property owners within Otay's service area were notified that a \$1,000 fine would be added to their water bills. These fines become an inseparable part of customer bills. If the charges go unpaid, Otay may disconnect water service, lien the delinquent properties, and may assess other damages and penalties as authorized by law.

In addition to penalties, anyone found to be stealing water will be assessed all costs associated with investigating and documenting the crime, as well as costs related to replacing damaged equipment. Costs incurred to investigate and remedy a violation are not appealable to the board of directors and are treated as inseparable from all other fees and charges on that account. Customers caught stealing water will also be charged for the water they used.

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, April 23

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Celebrating it's 23rd year, as a family-friendly community celebration of spring and a greener future.



The festival features fun programs, exhibitors and demonstrations that will help you become a better gardener and learn how to conserve our precious resources. The renowned Cuyamaca College Ornamental Horticulture department will be holding its biggest plant sale of the year.

OTAY WATER DISTRICT - Board of Directors

The Board of Directors meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 3:30 pm in the Board meeting room. The public is encouraged to attend at 2554 Sweetwater Springs Boulevard, Spring Valley, CA.

President

Mitch Thompson, Division 2
mthompson@otaywater.gov

Vice President

Jose Lopez, Division 4
jlopez@otaywater.gov

Treasurer

Tim Smith, Division 1
tsmith@otaywater.gov

Board Member

Gary Croucher, Division 3
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Board Member

Mark Robak, Division 5
OtayWater@cox.net



For more class information and prices visit www.thegarden.org



SAT, Feb, 27: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

**After the Lawn:
Finding Better Solutions**

Your lawn is dead or looks like it, now what I do? Landscape Designer, Connie Beck, will give you ideas and solutions to turn those areas into beautiful, inviting outdoor spaces. Cost: Members – Free; Non-members - \$10.00

SAT & SUN, March 12-13: 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

TOMATOMANIA!

Join California's largest tomato seedling sale featuring hundreds of heirloom and hybrid tomato varieties, expert advice, and the accessories you'll want to grow great-tasting tomatoes in your own backyard. A two-day event, March 12-13, from 9am-2pm.

SAT, April 2: 9:30 am to 4:30 pm

California Native Plant Society Tour

Come tour twenty native plant gardens in eastern San Diego, the El Cajon Valley, and the surrounding foothills with the California Native Plant Society. Get inspired, then learn how to save water and create beauty at our Sustainable Gardening Showcase. The Water Conservation Garden will be one of the inspiring tour stops. Learn more about the Native Plant Society Tour, visit <http://gardennative.org/>.

ONGOING EVENTS

Ask the Designer: Professional Landscape Design Consultations

The Water Conservation Garden offers 45-minute landscape design consultation services. With a focus on drought tolerant landscape, they will meet with you, one-on-one. Create a design plan and a list of plants. Call 619-660-0614 ext. 10 to schedule. \$60 Members, \$75 non-Members.

Free Docent Led Tours, SAT at 10:30am

Enjoy an informative walk through The Garden with one of the knowledgeable docents to hear what makes the garden special, and be inspired to create a water-wise landscape of your own. Check the website for monthly themed tours.

Ms. Smarty-Plants School Tours and Assembly Program

Calling all kid groups! Join Ms. Smarty-Plants™ as she takes you on a magical, fun and interactive journey through plant adaptations, the water cycle, conservation and much more. Become a Ms. Smarty-Plants™ Earth Hero! To book an educational tour of The Garden or a school assembly program, contact Education Assistant Jillian Chu at 619-660-6841 x16.

El Niño Finally Arrived - Now What?

We've had our first taste of El Niño rains; four inches in three days! That's almost half the rainfall we normally see in a year. Fortunately, we prepared ahead of time. The plumber came out a few weeks ago to clear in-ground drains. The tree trimmer lightened the canopies on our largest trees. The rain gutters got cleaned out, too. All were time and money well spent.

Many people ask me how to protect their plants from rains but that's not really an issue. As I mentioned in a recent radio interview about El Niño, when it rains, plants do a happy dance. Water doesn't hurt leaves or stems or branches. The risks instead, come from what happens to the water once it hits the ground. Standing water can drown plant roots; plants can be washed away in a mudslide or by fast moving water, or undermined by erosion.

How do you prepare for El Nino rains? Here's my to-do list:

- Clean out rain gutters so water doesn't cascade over the sides and smash the plants below.
- Redirect downspouts to disperse water into bio-swales. From there, it will slowly percolate into the soil. If you have poor draining clay soils, install rain barrels to save the water, then use it once the garden dries out.
- Check drains to be sure they work properly. Clear clogs to avoid flooding.
- Turn over pots, buckets and any other open containers that might collect and hold water long enough for mosquitoes to breed in.
- If you collect rainwater in open buckets, put a lid on the buckets between downpours.
- Protect bare slopes from erosion. Install straw wattles horizontally across hillsides. Wattles are essentially mesh tubes filled with straw and staked in place to serve as speed bumps as water runs downhill. By the end of the season, the straw will break down and can be emptied onto the soil. Compost "socks" are similar to wattles but are filled with compost.
- Manage the water in your rain barrels. Don't collect water from the first rain. That "first flush" carries chemicals, dust that settles from the air, dirt, bird poop, debris, etc. Let that water go and capture the next rainfall.
- Renew your garden's mulch. Organic mulch — that's mulch made from leaves, bark, wood, etc. — traps water as it falls. That protects soil from erosion and absorbs water like a sponge. Once water percolates into the soil, mulch helps keep it there by slowing evaporation. And, as mulch breaks down, it builds healthy soil to support the plants in your garden.
- Turn off your irrigation. If we get a long, hot dry spell or Santa Ana winds, you'll need to water. That's unlikely to happen more than a time or two between now and the end of March.
- Use the time between storms to plant. Plant any of our native plants and plants from dry climates of South Africa, Australia, Chile and the Mediterranean coast. Make your plans, do your research, then head to the nursery. Don't plant right away, however. Let the soil dry for three or four days after a rain. Digging and standing on wet soil compacts it, the opposite of what we want to do.
- When you do plant, plant directly into unamended soil. Research tells us that plants in "native" soils do better than those in amended soils. It's OK to toss in a few handfuls of worm castings, but skip the fertilizer and don't bother with soil amendments.

Remember this year's rains are to be welcomed, not feared. While they won't solve the drought, every drop certainly helps. Sadly, the El Niño rains won't end California's drought. But if you capture some of that rainfall, you can use it later in the year, after the rains end and the soils dry out. Shop for rain barrels and learn about rainwater harvesting at your local garden center or irrigation store.

¡La detección temprana de fugas le permitirá ahorrar agua y dinero!

El exitoso programa de reparación y detección de fugas del Distrito de Agua de Otay se va a implementar en más comunidades en 2016. Durante las próximas semanas, las comunidades que serán inspeccionadas son: Spring Valley, La Presa, Rancho San Diego, Calavo Gardens, Hillsdale, Jamul, Castle Park, Sunbow y Otay Mesa.

Los programas de detección y reparación de fugas permiten ahorrar agua garantizando la integridad del sistema. El distrito utiliza equipo con la más alta tecnología para la inspección de su sistema de distribución de agua con el fin de detectar alguna fuga en sus tuberías, medidores y válvulas. El equipo está diseñado para “escuchar” las fugas y puede localizar hasta la fuga más pequeña. Una vez que se identifica la fuga, el personal del distrito programará las reparaciones necesarias.

Los clientes que viven en los vecindarios que se van a inspeccionar verán a trabajadores enfrente de sus hogares y negocios levantando las cubiertas de los medidores de agua; revisando el contenido; y conectando equipo a las válvulas y medidores de agua. Los trabajos se realizarán normalmente de lunes a viernes entre las 7:00 a. m. y las 5:00 p. m. Sin embargo, también se podrán realizar en las mañanas temprano, noches o fines de semana. Los trabajadores utilizarán ropa con el logotipo de Wachs Water Services y llevarán consigo una identificación de la compañía. Los trabajadores no necesitan entrar a su casa ni le preguntarán si pueden tener acceso a ésta.

Si se sospecha que existe alguna fuga en la propiedad de un cliente, el personal del distrito se pondrá en contacto con el cliente para informarle acerca de la fuga. Los empleados del Distrito de Agua de Otay llevarán puestos sus uniformes y portarán una identificación. Los empleados del distrito no necesitan entrar a su casa. Si tiene alguna pregunta por favor comuníquese al 619-670-2222.

La detección y reparación de fugas de agua es parte del programa de mantenimiento preventivo para salvaguardar el suministro de agua, reducir la pérdida del vital líquido, y mantener las tarifas bajas. Para mayor información visite www.otaywater.gov.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE OTAY WATER DISTRICT CALL 619.670.2222 OR GO TO WWW.OTAYWATER.GOV