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FALL 2011

A NEWSLETTER FOR CUSTOMERS OF THE OTAY WATER DISTRICT



Dear Otay Water District Customers:

As a valued customer, it is important that we take a moment to clarify important information regarding Otay Water District and your water rates.

Otay Water District is proud to provide its customers with a safe and reliable water supply with rates that are among the lowest in San Diego County. The District has been able to achieve this goal because it constantly strives to be as efficient as possible and reduce costs while at the same time planning for the water needs of the future. With a "AA" bond rating from the most trusted bond rating agency in the world (Standard and Poor's), the District has been recognized for its "proactive management", "strong historical performance" and "solid finances going forward".

It is important to the District that customers understand the recent change to its employee post-retirement healthcare program, because so much information has been reported inaccurately. First, employees are paying for the new program and there will be no impact on your water rates as a result of this action. The District has every expectation that it will continue to provide water service at rates that are among the lowest in all of San Diego County.

You may be asking, "How will this employee healthcare program be paid for?" The answer is simple: Through employee negotiations, the District's employees have chosen to take money from their own pockets to pay for their pensions and for this healthcare program. While there is an initial first year cost, the program will save the District thousands of dollars every year starting in 2012.

Otay Water District takes seriously its unwavering commitment to the proactive stewardship of our water supply. This commitment spans not only our duty to provide a high quality, reliable supply of water to your homes and businesses, but also to do so in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.

There are a number of resources available where customers can find helpful information regarding Otay Water District. You may visit our website at www.otaywater.gov or call us at 619-670-2222 and a representative will be happy to speak with you directly.

Sincerely,

Mark Watton
General Manager, Otay Water District

Emergency Preparedness Protects Otay Customers During Power Outage

The extended power outage on September 8, 2011 did not affect normal operations at Otay Water District.

The District has invested in backup power generation for its critical facilities in order to avoid potential service disruptions during emergencies. Because of this advanced planning, when power went out across the region, the District was not only able to continue normal operations, but could continue operating normally for an extended period of time. Since no water facilities were without power, the safety of the water supply was never compromised. Additionally, there was no loss in water pressure and there was never a need to boil water before use.

Otay Water District maintains a 7-10 day emergency supply of water for customers throughout its service area stretching from Rancho San Diego to eastern Otay Mesa. In addition to this reserve, the District has the emergency power generation capabilities to ensure that customers always have water in emergency situations.

Planning for emergencies is an important part of our mission as your water service provider.

Check Your Water Pressure



Have you experienced a leaky faucet or a constantly running toilet?

A faulty pressure regulator may be the cause. Even in newer homes, pressure regulators can wear out and fail.

The quality of your pressure regulator dictates the years of service to expect. Regulators may last for as little as one year or as long as twenty years or more. To ensure proper water pressure in your home, it is your responsibility to maintain a working pressure regulator. When plumbing work is being done around your house, ask your licensed plumber to check your water pressure.

Pressure regulators can wear out and should be checked whenever any plumbing work is being done around the house.

Irrigation Systems Revert to Default Settings after Power Outages

Avoid Overwatering by Checking Irrigation Systems

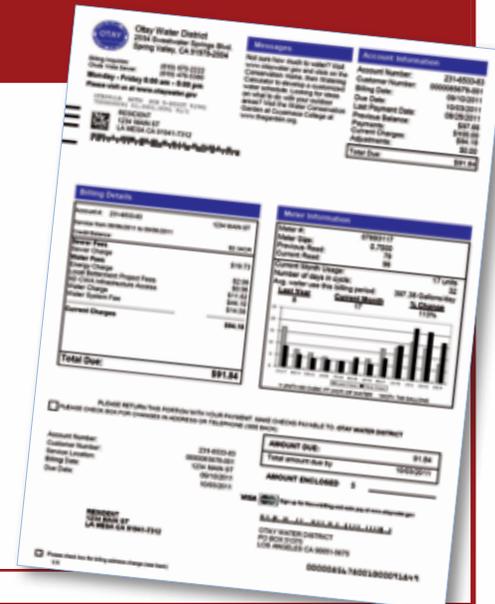
With the recent power outage, now is the perfect time to check your irrigation system to make sure everything is working correctly and avoid overwatering. Keep in mind that when power is lost to irrigation clocks or timers that do not have backup battery power, they may revert to the manufacturer's default setting of 10 minutes every day, typically at noon, and irrigate up to 70 minutes per week. To avoid overwatering your lawn or garden and potentially seeing a spike in your water bill, check your irrigation timer and reset the programming as needed. With the extended power outage in some areas, batteries may need to be replaced in controllers with backup power.

New Water Bill Design

Water bills from Otay Water District now have a new look that incorporates changes requested by our customers. The new bill design is better organized, easier to read and includes additional features that meet requests from residential and commercial customers.

The new features include:

- Prominently displayed Amount Due and Due Date information
- Information on current water usage, billing cycles and gallons of water used per day
- A 24-month history of water usage
- Clearly identifiable credit balances
- A consolidated summary bill for customers with multiple accounts
- Separately shown sewer charges for Chula Vista customers



Customers began receiving these new billing statements in September 2011.



**Sat., Nov. 5, 2011
9:00 am - 4:00 pm**

Join us at the Fall Garden and Home Festival where vendors from throughout Southern California will be selling drought tolerant plants perfectly suited to your San Diego garden. Selections will include native plants, water smart perennials, succulents, trees, shrubs, herbs and more. Visit the "Ask the Experts" areas to obtain information from landscape designers, master composters and other plant and gardening specialists who will help cultivate your green thumb.

The event will be held in the Water Conservation Garden located on the campus of Cuyamaca College at 12122 Cuyamaca Drive West in El Cajon.

General admission \$3; Members and Kids 12 and under free!

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 Spring Blvd., Spring Valley, CA.

President
Jaime Bonilla, Division 2
jbonilla@otaywater.gov

Vice-President
Gary Croucher, Division 3
gcroucher@otaywater.gov

Treasurer
David Gonzalez, Division 1
dgonzalez@otaywater.gov

Boardmember
Jose Lopez, Division 4
jlopez@otaywater.gov

Boardmember
Mark Robak, Division 5
OtayWater@cox.net



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

THE water conservation garden

The Water Conservation Garden offers educational programs for children, adults and landscape professionals, plus tours and events throughout the year. Pre-registration is required for all classes. Payments received before the date of your class guarantees your reservation.

A minimum of 10 students is required to hold a class. Please register early!

Thursday, October 13 — 6:30pm - 8:30pm

HILLSIDE GARDENING

Landscape Designer Connie Beck will show you how to make the most of gardening on a slope! Topics include erosion control, proper plant choices, terracing and plantings for retaining walls. A colorful slide show of several San Diego hillside gardens will reveal the creative possibilities unique to this style of gardening. Member Price: \$15.00. Non-Member Price: \$25.00. This class repeats November 8th.

Sunday, October 23 — 12:00pm

FAMILY CLASS – BUILD A SCARECROW

Get ready for fall decorating! Bring an old shirt, hat, pair of pants and other items to create your very own unique scarecrow. The scarecrow framework, stuffing, additional materials and instruction are included in the class fee. You may take your scarecrow home with you or let it hang out in the Kid's Zone of the Garden as decoration for the Fall Garden Festival! \$15 for members (one adult, one child) \$25 for non-members (one adult, one child) EXTRA ADULT OR CHILD \$5 at the door.

Tuesday, November 8 — 6:30pm - 8:30pm

SECRETS OF THE BEST LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS

Learn the secrets of professional landscape design with local Landscape Designer, Connie Beck. She will introduce you to the guiding principles necessary to designing beautiful, functional and low water landscapes that you can enjoy for years. Connie will also share an inspirational visual presentation to illustrate good design and help you avoid the pitfalls of owner-designed landscapes. Member Price: \$15.00. Non-Member Price: \$25.00

Low Water and Edible

While the politicians debate whether or not we are in a drought, those of us who have lived in Southern California for any length of time know that water is precious and needs careful management. It seems ironic, though, that as we grow more interested in growing our own produce to feed our families, water becomes less available and more expensive. "How" people ask me "can I save water and still grow food?"

It's not impossible, you just have to consider what you grow and how you water it. Many plants, fruiting plants in particular, are both edible and low water. Here are a few to get you started.

PINEAPPLE GUAVA (*Feijoa, Acca sellowiana*) is a beautiful evergreen shrub that grows about 12 feet tall and wide. Olive green leaves have attractive silvery undersides. In spring, pineapple guavas make big pink flowers with red tufts of stamens in the center. The petals are sweet enough to add to fruit salads. By the end of summer, the flowers morph into egg-shaped green fruits, two to three inches long. As they ripen, their skins dull somewhat and the fruits become slightly soft. These "self harvesting" fruits fall when they are ripe. Pick them up, slice them in quarters the long way and bite in. Yum!

FIGS (*Ficus carica*) are from the Mediterranean where it is as dry, or drier, than here. These easy-care deciduous trees have big, lobed green leaves and make fruits that are brown, green, yellow or striped. Fruits ripen at the end of summer and are ripe when soft. DON'T pick figs early, they taste terrible under ripe – and they ripen only on the tree. Enjoy figs right off the tree, use in baking, make preserves, or dry them and eat through the year.

GRAPES (*Vitis sp*) have grown in San Diego since the Franciscans arrived. In the early part of the 1900s, they were grown solely on rainfall and did well enough to support a large wine industry in San Diego.

Grapes grow in clusters on deciduous vines that are aggressive summer growers. Grape vines must have a strong support system like a fence or an arbor. Don't bother with a rickety trellis. Vines require significant pruning to maintain their size, and ensure the good air movement that prevents mildew and other diseases. Most grape varieties ripen in later summer.

POMEGRANATE (*Punica granatum*) is an ancient Mediterranean fruit that grows on a 10 foot by 10 foot deciduous shrub that is nearly carefree. In spring, pomegranate plants sprout small green leaves and bright orange/red flowers. Flowers become round fruits, typically deep red, by Halloween. Harvest as the skins turn deep colored and the fruits feel a little hollow, and may even split a bit. If you worry about pomegranate stains, plant a "white" pomegranate. White varieties are actually pale pink. Their seeds are nearly clear, not as astringent as red seeds, and the pith is soft enough to chew and swallow rather than spit out.

All of these plants are best watered with drip irrigation. Keep the soil around roots damp through the first year or two, and then cut back to watering periodically, only in the warm months. Whenever you water, do so deeply. Deep watering encourages deep, drought resistant roots. A three-inch layer of mulch holds that water in the soil, slowing its loss into the air.

— Nan Sterman is a low water gardening expert, author and garden designer. Her website is www.plantsoup.com.

CLASSES
AT THE Garden

Estimado Cliente del Distrito de Agua de Otay:

Por medio de la presente, nos permitimos aclararle información importante acerca del Distrito de Agua de Otay y de sus tarifas de agua.

El Distrito de Agua de Otay se enorgullece en ofrecer a sus clientes un suministro de agua seguro y confiable con tarifas que se encuentran entre las más bajas del Condado de San Diego. El Distrito ha podido lograr esto porque nos esforzamos constantemente para ser lo más eficiente posible, reducir costos, y al mismo tiempo planificar las necesidades de agua a futuro. Con una calificación de crédito AA por parte de Standard & Poor, la agencia de calificación crediticia más reconocida a nivel mundial, se le ha reconocido al Distrito por su "gestión proactiva", "desempeño histórico satisfactorio" y "recursos financieros firmes hacia el futuro".

También es importante para el Distrito que nuestros clientes estén informados del cambio reciente en el programa de beneficios de salud y retiro post-empleo de los empleados del Distrito, ya que se ha publicado información incorrecta acerca de este programa. Primeramente, los empleados del Distrito están pagando por este programa y no habrá impacto alguno en sus tarifas de agua. El Distrito tiene la confianza de poder seguir facilitando el servicio de agua a tarifas que se encuentran entre las más bajas del Condado de San Diego

Usted se estará preguntando: "¿Cómo se irá a pagar este programa de beneficios?" La respuesta es sencilla: A través de negociaciones, los empleados del Distrito han optado por tomar el dinero de su propio bolsillo para pagar por sus pensiones y por este plan de salud. Aunque si hay un costo inicial durante el primer año, el programa le ayudara al Distrito a ahorrar miles de dólares cada año a partir del 2012.

El Distrito de Agua de Otay se toma muy en serio su compromiso de administrar nuestro suministro de agua de manera proactiva. Este compromiso se extiende no solo a nuestro deber de proporcionar a sus hogares y empresas un suministro de agua confiable y de alta calidad, sino también hacerlo de una manera eficiente y económica.

Hay varios recursos disponibles donde nuestros clientes puedes encontrar información útil acerca del Distrito de Agua de Otay. Lo invitamos a visitar nuestra página de internet, www.otaywater.gov, o llamarnos al 619.670.2222 donde podrá comunicarse directamente con un representante.

Atentamente,



Mark Watton
Gerente General, Distrito de Agua de Otay

Preparación Para Casos De Emergencia Protege A Clientes de Otay Durante Apagón

El apagon prolongado del 8 de septiembre del 2011 no afectó las operaciones normales en el Distrito de Agua de Otay.

El Distrito ha invertido en la generación de energía de respaldo para sus instalaciones críticas con el fin de evitar posibles interrupciones de servicio durante una emergencia. Debido a esta planificación por adelantado, cuando se fue la luz en toda la región, el Distrito no sólo pudo continuar con sus operaciones normales, sino pudo seguir funcionando normalmente durante un período prolongado. Puesto que no hubo instalaciones de agua sin energía eléctrica, el suministro de agua se mantuvo seguro para beber. Además, no hubo ninguna pérdida en la presión del agua y no hubo la necesidad de hervir agua antes de su uso.

El Distrito de Agua de Otay mantiene un suministro de emergencia de 7-10 días para sus clientes a través de su área de servicio desde Rancho San Diego hasta el este de Otay Mesa. Además de esta reserva, el Distrito tiene la capacidad de generación de energía eléctrica para asegurar que sus clientes tengan agua en situaciones de emergencia.

Planear para casos de emergencia es una parte importante de nuestra misión como su proveedor de servicio de agua.



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