

Saving the Garden ... and Water, Too

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Edwin Oto uses recycled water in his garden.

Once water is on site, the question became how to get the water to the garden. Since the Lanes' lot sits below the road, they simply use gravity to get the water flowing; the Prestons have a level lot so gravity was not an option. Instead, they created a simple system with a sump pump to transfer the water from Central San to different containers around their garden and they water their plants manually with hoses.

The Taylors in Lafayette, who travel many times each weekend to get between 1,500 and 2,000 gallons of water, had to get professional about their water handling. They use a trailer to haul the water, a maximum of 300 gallons a trip, which equals about 1.2 tons, not something any normal vehicle can handle safely. "We are maintaining a small orchard and a front yard (that includes a lawn)," says Jann Taylor. "Personally, we would love for Californians to recycle and reuse all our sanitized water." She notes that a large part of her weekend is dedicated to getting the water, something she does not see as sustainable. "If we do not get a good downpour of water with El Niño this winter, the lawn might have to go," she says.

Edwin Oto also uses a trailer pulled by a small truck. He bought a 275-gallon container, at a cost of \$200, as well as a new powerful pump that gets him enough pressure to efficiently water his garden. He

goes to Martinez twice a week.

As a young man in college, he visited a treatment plant where he learned about the safety and benefits of recycled water. "Some say that this water has more minerals than the tap water," says the Moraga resident. "This could be why the plants we water with it are doing so well."

Taylor agrees and adds that it is like using Miracle Grow all the time. "My roses look so healthy," she says. Oto and his wife don't feel that they needed a lawn; they consider it a waste of water and they took theirs out, "but we needed water to keep plants alive," he adds.

The sanitary district confirmed that recycled water is perfectly safe for the vegetable garden, though people should not drink it. "In Monterey County recycled water is used widely by commercial growers," says Hodges. "The water is perfectly safe to use for vegetable gardens; all you need is to wash your vegetables before eating them."

For information and to registration to participate in the program, visit <http://centralsan.org/index.cfm?navid=1348>.

Photos Sophie Bracinni



Bobbie and Tom Preston's garden