

Valley mayors urge conservation ahead of possible drought

By John McDonald

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OKANAGAN - With possible drought looming, mayors from Osoyoos to Armstrong are urging valley residents to voluntarily begin conserving water ahead of normal watering restrictions.

The signs are already here and the need to react early is clear, Okanagan Basin Water Board chairman Doug Findlater says.

"There is no snow from here to Big White and we're usually building some snowpack at this time of year," Findlater says. "It's all gone except where they've piled it up and at the higher elevations."

Findlater says his own community of West Kelowna has developed a drought plan to counter what he describes as the possibility of 'serial dry summers'.

A level four drought advisory was issued for the Okanagan region in early August last summer and continued through to September.

"If we don't get our spring rains, we could end up in the same situation we were in last year, where the province orders utilities and residents to cut back on water use," Findlater adds.

During a media conference today, May 11, he also touched on the increased fire risk during drought years.

"Fire season has come early in Western Canada and we've had enough experience with devastating fires in the Okanagan to know we can't waste our water."

As part of the water board's Make Water Work conservation program, Findlater challenged other valley mayors and vowed personally to make sure he didn't water pavement when irrigating his garden.

Save money and water with drought tolerant plant collection

By John McDonald

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OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARDS EXPANDS LOW WATER PLANT COLLECTION UNDER MAKE WATER WORK CAMPAIGN

OKANAGAN - With drought a distinct possibility this summer in the Okanagan and watering restrictions likely, now is a great time to think low-water plants for your garden.

And it just so happens the Make Water Work program is expanding its plant collection to 54 drought-tolerant species that thrive in the Okanagan, communications director Corinne Jackson says.

Since its inception in 2011, the Make Water Work campaign has focused on reducing the 25 per cent of water that ends up on lawns and gardens.

With the introduction of the plant collection last year, the focus now includes educating homeowners about the range of drought tolerant plants available at select local greenhouses and garden centres, Jackson says.



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Video by InfoNews Kelowna: <https://www.facebook.com/228894400572976/videos/872639962865080/>

Developed by Bylands Nursery and the Okanagan Xeriscape Association, the collection includes grasses, perennials, shrubs and trees, Jackson adds.

Two new garden centres have joined the program, bringing to nine the number of places in the Okanagan Valley drought-conscious gardeners can buy plants.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is a joint venture of the three regional districts that surround the lake, North Okanagan, Central Okanagan and Okanagan Similkameen.

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