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- Online Edition
- Local News
- Classifieds
- Photo Gallery
- About Us
- Advertising Rates
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Oliver man wins big in 'WaterWise' contest

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Contributed

To the Chronicle

An Oliver man is one of four lucky Okanagan residents who will receive up to \$1,000 in yard improvements as part of a contest he won.

Norman Gerow participated in the Okanagan "WaterWise" program, which was a pledge to make water work more efficiently.

The contest let people know how much water they use and how to use it more conservatively. "The fact is we have less fresh water available to us here in the Okanagan than anywhere in Canada, yet we use two times more than the average Canadian," said Corinne Jackson, the Okanagan Basin Water Board's communications director.

Jackson said Okanagan residents use 675 litres per person per day compared to 329 for the average Canadian.

She noted that seven per cent of our water is used by residents indoors, while 24 per cent is used outdoors – mostly on lawns and gardens in the summer.

Besides Gerow, Sandy Gregson from Osoyoos was another winner. They will receive an outdoor water assessment of either their in-ground irrigation or their landscape, worth up to \$500. In addition, they'll each receive \$500 in products and services to "water wise" their yard. "Woo hoo! You gotta love that," responded Gerow. "I think I have a leak in my underground sprinkler system - you can see it on my water bill."

Penticton winner Pat Maxwell said the family is always looking to do things to make their yard more water wise. "We tried our best to xeriscape the front but I can't really afford to do much." Jackson noted that Sagebrush Nursery from Oliver also came on board with the contest with a wide variety of native and drought-tolerant plants and xeriscape materials.

The "Make Water Work" pledge contest was part of the "Tap-by-Tap" campaign in the South Okanagan, in which residents were invited to pick up a free water conservation kit from their municipality.

To learn more, visit www.makewaterwork.ca. or www.okwaterwise.ca.

The following is a list of simple tips to "make water work" and was the basis of the pledge contest:

Water should be put to work during the coolest part of the day to prevent evaporation. A good rule of thumb is 10 pm to 6 am. Check with your local water utility for watering restrictions. The pledge: to only water my lawn between dusk and dawn.

Most lawns need just 2.5 centimetres (one inch) of water per week – about the depth of a tuna can.

Watering deeply and less often promotes deep, healthy root growth. If you're watering deeply but not seeing results, the problem may be inadequate topsoil. Try top dressing with half an inch of compost, then over-seeding for a thick vigorous lawn. The pledge: to only water my lawn one inch a week.

Water works more efficiently when grass is left five to eight centimetres (two to three inches) tall. This slows evaporation from the soil. The pledge: to leave my grass two to three inches tall.

Water works best when grass clippings are left as mulch on your lawn. They help feed the lawn and retain moisture, requiring less water and reducing evaporation. The pledge: to leave grass clippings as mulch.

Water works best with organic products like compost which minimize over-fertilizing and help prevent stormwater pollution. Aerating the lawn in early spring or fall also improves water penetration. The pledge: to aerate my lawn and top dress with compost.

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Water works most effectively when paired with plants suitable to our dry climate (drought-tolerant turf and native and low-water variety plants) The pledge: to change out some of my lawn with drought-tolerant turf and/or native and low-water variety plants.

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