

## Garden event showcases WaterWise effort

By Vernon Morning Star

Published: **September 23, 2012 01:00 AM**

Updated: **September 21, 2012 03:403 PM**

A trend of making water work outdoors in the South Okanagan is hoping to catch on in the northern end of the valley.

A newly xeriscaped yard of Pat and Doug Maxwell, of Penticton, was the setting for a recent garden party organized by the Okanagan Basin Water Board and its outreach program Okanagan WaterWise, recognizing efforts by local residents of the Okanagan, businesses and municipalities to conserve water and energy.

"The Maxwell's are a great example of what people can do in their own yards to make a difference, not just lowering their own water and energy bills, but helping to keep a sustainable supply of these resources for everyone in the valley," said OBWB chair Stu Wells.

The Maxwells took the Make Water Work pledge and were entered to win WaterWise yard improvements, which they won.

The pledge contest was a unique partnership, created with several local businesses known for promoting WaterWise practices.

"On average, each Okanagan resident uses 675 litres of water per day compared to 329 in Canada, yet we have less freshwater available than almost anywhere in Canada," said Wells.

"And, of all the water we use in the Okanagan, 24 per cent is used by residents outdoors – mostly on our lawns. That is the second highest use, right after agriculture.

"We need to ask ourselves," added Wells, "are we going to continue to pour drinking water on our lawns – water that has gone through costly treatment to meet drinking quality standards, or are we going to make some changes in our homes and to our landscaping.

The contest in the South Okanagan was part of a much larger valley-wide Make Water Work campaign aimed at offering simple solutions to Okanagan residents to help save water.

"We're not saying you can't have lawns or you can't water. We're saying make water work – make it work more efficiently and more effectively. A lot of our water is just wasted.

"It's important that residents of this valley recognize we aren't the only ones who need water. We also need water for food crops, for the salmon that are returning to spawn, and for firefighting."

"FortisBC is committed to helping our customers conserve energy and lower energy costs.

"As such, we're pleased to have partnered with local municipal governments, City Green and the Okanagan WaterWise's Make Water Work campaign to help reduce the strain on local water treatment facilities and extend the community's natural water supply," said Melissa Manley, FortisBC's PowerSense program manager.

"We're also pleased to announce that Tap by Tap is extending into the Central Okanagan next week."

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