

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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## Saving the Garden ... and Water, Too

By Sophie Braccini



*Mike Taylor on his trailer with water containers.*

*Photo Jann Taylor*

Water restrictions can be painful. It is not easy for local gardeners to see the trees, annuals and perennials that were chosen with care, and grown with dedication, wither away. But several Lamorinda residents have found an innovative solution to lessen the pain: using free recycled water from the Central Contra Costa Sanitary district (Central San) to save all or part of their landscaping.

Passersby may have noticed small signs planted on front gardens that say: "Irrigated with free recycled water." The solution might be free, but it is not for everyone. It takes equipment and weekly trips to Martinez, but these residents are proving every day that you can save potable water and the garden at the same time.

"We wanted to save our trees, the citrus and the small maple," explains

Lafayette resident Carolyn Lane. "We were not trying to get the lawn going, but we were concerned about the trees." The Lanes were willing to make as big an effort as possible to contribute to saving potable water for drinking use, so when they saw in the Central San newsletter, *The Pipeline*, that the agency was giving out free recycled water to residents, they looked into it and now go twice a week to Martinez,

bringing back 150 gallons each time.

"We have had the recycled water program available for industrial and agricultural use for some time," says Central San project manager Nathan Hodges. "We decided to make it available for residents to get people used to recycled water." Hodges explains that the water coming out of the treatment plants is either sent to the San Francisco Bay, or is retreated before it is used as recycled water. "We recycle one and a half to two million gallons a day," says Hodges. "A part is used by ourselves in our treatment plant; other large users include the Pleasant Hill and Concord school districts that use it for their landscaping, local golf courses, and parks." He says that the Dublin San Ramon Services District was the first one to start recycling and using this water in the area.

In Moraga, Barbara and Tom Preston are also taking advantage of the free water to take care of a garden lush with plants and trees. "We first went to Central San with the trash cans we use to collect roof run-off, but were told that we needed containers with a screw-in lid," explains Barbara Preston, "so we bought drums that could fit in the back of the minivan." The Prestons go to Central San twice a week and get about 135 gallons of water each trip.

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