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Kate Meis, Local Government Commission
(916) 448-1198 x305 | kmeis@lgc.org

Cindy Blain, California ReLeaf
(916) 497-0034 | cblain@californiareleaf.org

“Save Our Water and Our Trees!” Campaign Offers Tips to Help Trees Thrive

Sacramento, CA – The Local Government Commission has partnered with California ReLeaf, Save Our Water and a coalition of urban forest and other concerned organizations to raise awareness about the importance of proper tree care during this historic drought.

“Cities are taking critical steps to reduce their water use, but these measures need to be implemented with consideration of important community resources. For example if we're encouraging residents to let their lawns die, we also need to provide information about how to keep trees alive,” said Kate Meis, Executive Director of the Local Government Commission.

With potentially millions of urban trees at risk, this campaign focuses on a simple yet urgent message: **Save Our Water and Our Trees!** The Save Our Water *and* Our Trees partnership is highlighting tips for both residents and agencies on how to water and care for trees so that they not only survive the drought, but thrive to provide shade, beauty and habitat, clean the air and water, and make our cities and towns healthier and more livable for decades to come.

Save Our Water is California’s official statewide conservation education program. California ReLeaf, a statewide urban forest nonprofit, provides support and services to more than 90 community nonprofits that plant and care for trees.

“While Californians cut back on water use during the drought, it is critical to community health to save our lawn trees by setting up alternative watering systems once you turn off the regular sprinklers,” said Cindy Blain, Executive Director of California ReLeaf.

“Watering trees to keep them alive during drought doesn’t waste water. It is a prudent use of our limited resources to preserve an important community investment. Trees provide multiple benefits for the economy, the environment, public health and general well-being,” Meis said. “Urban trees require little water and minimal care, but they provide a significant return on investment.”

Lawn trees can and must be saved during the drought. What you can do:

1. Deeply and slowly water mature trees 1-2 times per month with a simple soaker hose or drip system toward the edge of the tree canopy – NOT at the base of the tree. Use a hose faucet timer (found at hardware stores) to prevent overwatering.
2. Young trees need 5 gallons of water 2-4 times per week. Create a small watering basin with a berm of dirt.
3. Shower with a bucket and use that water for your trees long as it is free of non-biodegradable soaps or shampoos.
4. Do not over-prune trees during drought. Too much pruning and drought both stress your trees.
5. Mulch, Mulch, MULCH! Providing 4-6 inches of mulch around a tree helps retain moisture, reducing water needs and protecting your trees.

Trees in irrigated landscapes become dependent on regular watering and when watering is reduced – and especially when it’s stopped completely – trees will die. Tree loss is a very costly problem: not only in expensive tree removal, but in the loss of all the benefits trees provide: cooling and cleaning the air and water, shading homes, walkways and recreation areas as well as human health impacts.

“This summer it is vital that Californians limit outdoor water use while preserving trees and other important landscaping,” said Jennifer Persike, Deputy Executive Director of External Affairs and Operations, Association of California Water Agencies. “Save Our Water is urging Californians to Let It Go – GOLD this summer, but don’t forget to keep your trees healthy.”

“Squandering our community’s investment – by letting our urban trees die – will have immediate and lasting consequences,” Meis said. “As we make important decisions about where to cut water use, we must consider these long-term consequences.”

Save Our Water has been urging Californians to “Let It Go” this summer by limiting outdoor water use and letting lawns fade to gold, while preserving precious water resources for trees and other important landscapes.

“To save our water and our trees, it will take all of us working together – state agencies, local governments, residents and community groups – to ensure immediate drought relief and long-term drought resilience,” said Danielle Dolan, who manages the LGC’s water programs.

FOR MORE RESOURCES

Save Our Water’s website is available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#) and is filled with tips, tools and inspiration to help every Californian find new and creative ways to conserve. From tips on how to keep trees healthy during the drought to an interactive section allowing users to visually explore how they can save water both inside and outside the home, Save Our Water has a wealth of resources available for Californians.

ABOUT THE LGC

The Local Government Commission (lgc.org) is a nonprofit organization fostering innovation in environmental sustainability, economic prosperity and social equity. The LGC is helping to transform communities through inspiration, practical assistance and a network of visionary city, county and regional leaders. We help build awareness about the impact that land-use decisions have on transportation, public health, energy, climate change and fiscal strength.

Check out the LGC’s “[Livable Places Update](#),” including the [June 2015 issue](#) on “Save Our Trees and Save Our Water: Maintain Landscaping Investments and Conserve Water;” the [February 2015 issue](#) on “California’s drought-ridden communities look to add mulch, remove lawns;” the January 2015 issue on “Soil as a Sponge to Reduce the Impacts of Drought;” and the [January 2014 issue](#) on strategies for dealing with the drought.

See the LGC’s [Ahwahnee Water Principles](#) and [Guidebook](#).

The [Ahwahnee Water Principles for Resource-Efficient Land Use](#) are a comprehensive and integrated set of principles and policies that offer communities common sense and practical ways to address multiple water resource issues with smart planning and land-use decisions.

The [Ahwahnee Water Principles: A Blueprint for Regional Sustainability](#) describes each principle and provides model projects in communities that are already implementing the strategies.

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