

## From Lawn to Pond

Although you may have heard it before, here is a reminder.

According to the Okanagan Basin Water Board's (OBWB) Okanagan Water Supply and Demand Project (March 2010), domestic water use in the Okanagan Valley is 675 litres per person per day. Compare this to the provincial average (490litres/day) and the national average (329 litres/day).

The report states “outdoor domestic landscaping accounts for a year round average of 525 litres per person per day” and that “during the...irrigation season, total domestic water use by Okanagan residents averages more than 1,000 litres per person per day” – and we live in the driest area of the country!

How can this be?

Just take a look at the green lawns in virtually every landscape in Okanagan municipalities. According to the OBWB's Study, of the domestic water used out-of-doors, **50% or more of it is applied to the lawn**. In most cases, this is treated drinking water going onto a species (Kentucky bluegrass) that would naturally go dormant in the summer if it wasn't receiving copious amounts of water.

Granted, there are valid benefits to having a green space in your landscape. The key is to ensure the green space is of a **practical** size, shape and location. Visit [www.okanaganxeriscape.org](http://www.okanaganxeriscape.org) for more information on assessing your landscape and tips and options for reducing your outdoor water use.

I've previously suggested removing lawn and replacing it with an edible garden. The benefits of growing your own food are virtually endless.

Today I want to suggest yet another way to reduce the lawn space (thereby reducing water use): installing a pond.

True, water evaporates from a pond, but considerably less water is used to replace the water lost to evaporation than is used on the lawn. A pond is also much more sustainable (read 'environmentally friendly') than a Kentucky bluegrass lawn.

Perhaps the best thing about putting a pond into your backyard is its entertainment and educational value – something you just cannot get from watching grass grow! Here's an example.

Grasslands Nursery was contracted to transform a rather dreadful (sorry Karen!) landscape. Among many other projects, the work including removing a tarp-lined pit (passing as a 'pond') and replacing it. A waterfall, stream, and second pond will complete the updated water feature.

Not only was it entertaining to watch the birds fussing and loudly making their thoughts known when the existing waterhole was being excavated, but now that the new pond is in place, the landowner is thrilled to watch their daily antics.

Everything the birds need is right there. They are nesting and raising young in the two dense evergreens at the pond edge. Just outside their habitat, next to the pond, is a strategically placed rock that has a natural depression in it – the perfect way to get a drink of water while still keeping an eye on the youngsters.

The pond is just a hop away. It is home to a dozen brightly-coloured goldfish and water plants: water lilies, water hyacinths, miniature cattail, parrot's feather, and water lettuce to name a few.

At Karen's request, the landscaping crew created Pebble Beach as well as a shelf just two inches down into the pond water. This is where the birds (robin, quail, sparrow, oriole, finch, cardinal) bathe.

To preen and dry off, they perch on an interestingly shaped log that rises about one foot off the ground. Again, the log (which came down Trout Creek with the spring run-off and was salvaged from the Sun-Oka dog beach) is close to home and shelter.

For those feathered friends who prefer a dry bath, an area of silt is set in next to Pebble Beach precisely for that purpose.

Although landscaping work is still progressing very close to the pond, the birds recognize 'their' new space is ready for use and take full advantage of it. Their music, movement, and everyday hygiene rituals provide Karen pleasure ... and I think the birds might be smiling too!

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Sharpen your pencil and your brain. Can you, in five steps, change the word LAWN to the word POND? You can only change one letter at a time, and each resulting configuration of letters must be an English word. The first reader to email their solution to [info@grassnursery.ca](mailto:info@grassnursery.ca) wins a \$25 gift certificate from Grasslands Nursery.

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