

Yesterday I was told, not unkindly, that I have a strong personality. At first, the frankness of this comment took me by surprise, but I certainly acknowledge the truth in it.

I tend to welcome change and the challenges that often accompany it, but I also stand by my own beliefs and commitments. I have strong opinions about some things and passionately voice my thoughts, perhaps too strongly on occasion.

On the other hand, I like to think I am open to fresh ideas and new ways of doing things and recognize everyone has their opinion on 'everything'.

Anyone who knows me or Grasslands Nursery, or follows this column (thank you, readers) is aware of how I feel about Water: how to conserve it, how to reduce its use, how to use it wisely.

Currently, we have 'enough' water to sustain agriculture crops, fish habitats, and ourselves. It is important, however, to understand that if we manage our water effectively *now*, we will *always* have enough water. In other words, water can be sustainable provided we act sensibly while we still have adequate resources to go around.

Of the total amount of water used in the Okanagan Valley, an astonishing 86% is used for irrigation. (Source: Okanagan Basin Water Board [Water Supply Webinar](#), March 15, 2011).

As homeowners, the 24% of water used outdoors is the figure we can most ably address. Drilling down one more level, of this 24%, 50% or more is used to water our lawns.

So, the easiest solution to managing domestic outdoor water use is quite straightforward: reduce the size of your lawn and use plants that require less water to thrive.

I'm not suggesting removing your lawn and replacing it with rock. As an adult whose children are making lives for themselves now, I don't have any use for a lawn other than providing a space for my dog. I love to watch him playing on the little patch of Eco-Lawn™ in the backyard. It is very small (about 200 sq. ft.) and grows without much water or effort on my part, but it's perfect for him.

Consider how practical the size of your lawn is. Given that so much of our *treated* water is being used to help keep a green space healthy, think about ways to reduce your lawn area to a practical size.

Going one step further (as you knew I would!): if you don't use your lawn, why grow one at all? Use the space to grow fruit and vegetables, put in low-water species, install a permeable patio – one that allows rainwater to infiltrate the soil and re-

enter the hydrological cycle. There are plenty of attractive and enjoyable alternatives to a large swath of lawn.

Needless to say, these are simply my personal views about our (North Americans') penchant for water-hungry lawns. I most certainly welcome your shared or dissenting opinion and invite you to join the discussion at grasslands-nursery.blogspot.com.

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