

The Problem with Lawns Transcript

We go and we turn on a tap. We open a garden hose. Stuff comes out. And my job, I guess, is to keep people thinking about it.

There will come a point where you've kind of exhausted most of the limits of technology and community-wide conservation. But it's certainly not in the near term. There's lots of room for Las Vegas to improve their water efficiency.

You don't want to make it unaffordable for people to bathe and do their laundry and so forth. But you do need to give them an incentive to think about changing their landscaping or some of these other things.

It wasn't always about saving the planet. It was about there's a bill coming at the end of the month and it's gonna reflect all this behavior.

The Southern Nevada Water Authority states that its mission is to manage the region's water resources and develop solutions that will ensure adequate future water supplies for the Las Vegas valley. To help curb water usage, the Water Authority patrols neighborhoods looking for water waste.

Water waste includes any water that sprays or flows off the property.

And we have water flowing down the street, flowing—

It also includes lawns watered outside of assigned times designed to reduce daytime evaporation.

Investigator 7639. June 3, 2008. Investigator 7639. June 3, 2008. Left a door hanger at 7904.

We have some over-irrigation. As you can see, some water sheeting off the curb.

You can spend \$7,000 to \$10,000 putting gravel and rocks in. And, I'd rather get like health insurance or something than do that. So being a painter, I did what a painter would do and fixed it my way.

This is the Mojave Desert, and we're pretending it's Mayberry. And, it is Mayberry, but it's a different Mayberry.

So zero-scaping is the future, especially in the southwest, particularly the Vegas valley. The demand for water right now is at a premium. So, where people have areas where they don't necessarily need grass, why not convert it? Save themselves money on their water bill, beautify their property, probably increase its value because now the existing landscaping is almost no maintenance.

From what we understand, 70 percent of most people's home water bill, if they have grass in their yard, is used outside. So if you can minimize the use of that by the drip systems that are installed around selective plants which are drought tolerant and decorative and nice-- but those drip irrigation systems that are out now, they directly deliver water to the root ball of the plant in a nice deep water root setting. And so it's a more efficient water delivery system to the plants that are there.

And you don't—like on a windy day, if anybody's got sprinklers running right now, it's vaporized before it even hits the ground. So it saves them so much in water and in waste and in money on their water bill.

The Southern Nevada Water Authority is paying \$1.50 per square foot to homeowners or to the HOA communities like this to convert their grass. So they're literally subsidizing the conversion for these communities and homeowners by giving them \$1.50 unlimited per square foot to convert their grass. And when it's all said and done, it actually looks like a natural setting, something that could be considered indigenous, mounds, undulations. We're in the desert. The ground's never flat really. It's always got bumps and hills.

We rank much higher than some other cities. We also rank below some other cities, but they're lesser known cities. And so, people want to say, well, Tucson is here and you're here. So what's the difference? We're very different communities. If you visit Tucson, you know you're in a different place than you are in Las Vegas. Our industry here is hosting for 40 million tourists to come visit us. We're an entertainment capital and an international destination.

We have a perception versus reality problem. We have the perception of the Strip with a lot of water being used against the reality of the fact that that water as being used in highly efficient ways. And if you took all of the water up and down the Strip corridor, every bit of it, it accounts for 8 percent of the available water in Clark County. All of the water in the water features that you see, the Fountains, the Siren's Cove, the Volcano, all of that is recycled water. Every bit. So the amount that's actually consumed, the amount that's lost either to evaporation or in some other way is used, is incredibly small.

We have undergone in the last few years an enormous program of removing turf from our properties. And as a result, hundreds of acres of turf have been removed and either replaced with desert landscaping or replaced with artificial turf. But we should never forget the fact that 92 percent of the water in this community is used among residences and non-gaming businesses throughout Clark County.