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Letters to the Editor

## Local Ag Doing Its Part to Save Water

Although I live on a farm, I, like so many city residents, am suffering as I watch my lawn die. I remember as a horticultural student in college reading about the significance of a green lawn. There was speculation that the green surface represented an innate need for tranquility, safety and peace. Of course when I graduated in the 60's, grass had a whole different meaning besides something to lay on while watching the clouds float by in peace and tranquility. Be that as it may, today, lawns have morphed into something entirely different. They are a symbol of temperance and responsibility. The owner of the brownest lawn has been elevated to an elite class of citizen worthy of admiration. As incongruous as this may seem, in California, it is our reality.

Traditional lawn grasses need a lot of water, however, there are some alternatives that are considerably more water wise. A little research can point you in the right direction. This coupled with a grey water and/or recycled water/catchment system can give you the green you yearn for. Lawns do have benefits: they are great filters, great outdoor coolers, and CO2 consumers. They do have a place in a landscape, however limited that may be.

lot of people ask me about the farm community and their water use. The typical question is "I'm doing my part for the drought, why isn't agriculture?". In a word, it's perception. Most people don't know of the impact on farmers statewide and in our valley and they don't know of the creative solutions farmers are implementing.

Fact: Conservation is up in our valley with leaders like the Driscoll's setting new records in rolling back water use on their crops. New wireless irrigation networking (WIN) technology is helping more and more farmers reduce water use by measuring available water in the soil allowing for accurate irrigation timing. Statewide: Central Valley farmers received an 80% cut in water from the state water system and a 100% cut from the federal system. Also, as I'm writing, long standing historical riparian water rights are being curtailed and farmers are being told that water that had built generations of farms is no longer available to them. The reality is this: state farmers have suffered extreme water curtailments, laid off 10's of thousands of farm workers and have suffered major economic loss because of the drought (\$1.5 Billion and counting) It is estimated that over 400,000 acres have been fallowed.

equivalent. For local Ag, there is more to be done to bring all parties to the table, however, there are many already there and they deserve our thanks. Our local agency (PVMMA) is working with the farm community to find solutions through cooperation and creative science. Perception aside, we are living in a drier California and in this valley, we are way ahead of

others in implementing a plan to secure our water future. Those of us in farming that continue to conserve and those behind the scenes that are educating (NRCS, RCD, local NGO's and UC Ag Extension) deserve a lot of credit whether we live in the city or on the farm, perception or not.

Dave Cavanaugh - Farmer & Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency Director

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