

## The Face of Water Conservation

Meet Dayna Hydrick. She lives in University City. Her toenails are painted cactus green. She owns a Corgi named Angus who's recovering from cancer. Her backyard smells like sage.

When City Council members say [they are concerned](#) about instituting a water cuts plan that penalizes residents who have already conserved, Hydrick is the type of resident they're talking about.

Hydrick tore her lawn out in 1998. She replaced thirsty grass with drought-tolerant plants, succulents and sages. "I hate lawn," she says.

Her water use plummeted. Before she ripped her grass out, she used 164,000 gallons of water a year. Last year, she used just 85,000 gallons, well below the city's average. If Mayor Jerry Sanders' chosen plan for cutting citywide water consumption gets approved, Hydrick expects she'll have to cut again. Sanders plans to base cuts on residents' consumption between 2004 and 2007. Hydrick cut her use long before that period and won't get credit for it.



She has already conserved, but not enough to be exempt from Sanders' plan. The mayor and city water officials call that a "supersaver credit" and say 21 percent of residents will qualify.

Not Hydrick. "It's really going to frost me," she says.

Local water agencies have recognized Hydrick for doing the right thing. In 2006, she won grand prize in the do-it-yourself category of a drought-tolerant landscaping contest sponsored by the San

Diego County Water Authority and Los Angeles-based Metropolitan Water District.

"I'd like to think I've achieved something," she says. "Maybe I didn't go far enough."

Hydrick admits she has a bit of room to use less water. She's already traded in her inefficient toilets, bought a low-water-using dishwasher and clothes washer. But she worries she'll be penalized because she leaves the faucet running while brushing her teeth. She frets that she'll choke if she turns it off. "It psychologically bothers me," she confesses.

She waters her front yard by hand about once every month or two. Her backyard gets a 10-15 minute dousing once every 10 days.

If Hydrick cuts back and still gets dinged on her water bill, she says she will not be happy. "Screw the city," she says. She wonders whether Sanders and city water officials are just trying to generate revenue for the Water Department, not save water. "They're probably just picking an easy method because they have so many problems down there," she says.

Hydrick worries, too, about the message the city is sending. She wonders how people will ever conquer their love for lawns if the city still penalizes them once they've converted to native landscaping.

But she promises to do what she can to conserve even more. Saving water fundamentally makes sense, she says.

"I don't want to spend more money on things I don't have to," she says. "That's ridiculous. I could buy more shoes."

-- [ROB DAVIS](#)

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