



WATER-SAVING TIPS AND OTHER LESSONS FROM CAPE TOWN

According to reports, the city may be the first in SA (and the world) to run out of water. However, Capetonians may be able to avert Day Zero, thanks to their conservation efforts. Cape Town is not the only area in SA struggling with water shortages – shrinking dam levels in Lesotho and Johannesburg are also raising alarm bells. Meanwhile, Nelson Mandela Bay in the Eastern Cape has imposed water restrictions. Cape Town has reduced its water consumption by thousands of litres, thanks in part to major water usage restrictions. Originally, the city urged residents to keep consumption to 87 litres per person per day, but this has since been reduced to 50 litres. Some residents have even boasted that, through their vigilance, they've managed to reduce their water bill to zero.

Angelique Ruzicka finds out how they do it and looks at what other provinces can learn from the Mother City



RECYCLING GREY WATER

1 According to greywater.co.za, a family of four uses between 300 and 400 litres of potable and therefore reusable water a day.

Grey water in the home is made up of bath, shower, basin, sink or laundry water, but excludes water collected from toilets. Installing a grey water recycling system can go a long way towards helping to reduce your water consumption.

Interwaste says: "Shop around for a grey water recycling system that is best suited to your budget and household requirements. There are aboveground and underground water systems that you can buy, and though these may seem pricey, the money you save in the long run [because of savvy water usage]

far outweighs the initial outlay costs."

USING WATERLESS PRODUCTS

2 Products that do not require water have been developed to clean our cars and even ourselves, and residents and businesses in the Mother City have embraced the use of these products.

Things as simple as turning off the shower taps while you lather yourself in soap, reducing the time in the shower and rarely flushing the toilet have gone a long way to help cut water usage.

Businesses have encouraged customers to do the same. Last year, Virgin Active said it managed to reduce water consumption in its gyms' showers from 16 to 7.5 litres per minute.

Many Capetonians have invested in products that don't need to be used with water. Malls have also gone the extra mile by encouraging shoppers to use hand sanitiser gels to clean their hands. Some have even disconnected

the taps in the public restrooms.

PLANTING HARDIER PLANTS

3 Maintaining water-guzzling plants and lush green lawns is no longer practical. Alison Groves, regional director and sustainability consultant for WSP Africa, says developing xeriscaped gardens is the answer.

This involves choosing water-wise plants that only need rainfall to survive and flourish, so they don't require

irrigation and are easy to maintain.

USING RESTRICTIVE DEVICES

4 Capetonians have become astute when it comes to conserving water and using various devices to help them avoid Day Zero.

While you wait for the shower to warm up, the cold water just goes down the drain. Many residents collect this water in buckets and use it to water their plants and vegetables, and to flush the loo. Leaving the bucket in the shower while you wash will collect further water. Another option is to fit products that restrict the flow from taps.

Groves says: "Use low-flow fittings for taps, which can be screwed onto a tap spout, or others that can be integrated into the tap line. The amount of water used goes from 12 litres a minute to as

little as two litres a minute."

FINDING OTHER SOURCES

5 Although rain has been scarce in Cape Town, residents have been collecting whatever falls using tanks that are connected to their gutters.

They've also installed boreholes and well points, and collect water from various springs that have been marked as safe to drink by the city.

Going off the grid is entirely possible if you invest in the right infrastructure. According to Builders Warehouse, depending on the type of roof you have, a roof that is 100m² can see you harvest 1 000 litres from 10mm of rain.

A three-bedroom house usually has a roof that's about 150m², so connect as many tanks as you can to all the gutters around your house. A 100m² metal roof can capture 60 000 litres of rainwater a year.

