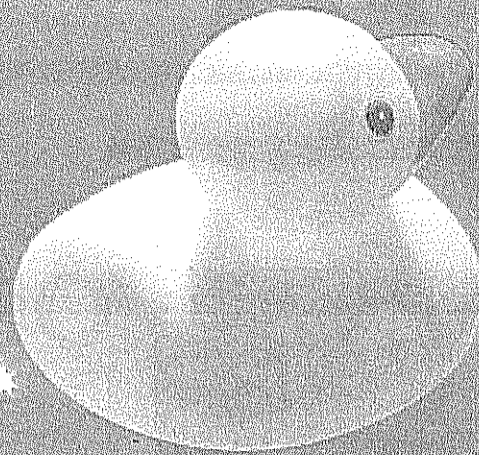


DIVE IN: Conserve water



The drought level is moderate — what should you do?

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources recently upgraded the drought level to moderate.

So, what does that mean?

Well imagine the drought level was like the Homeland Security's terrorism threat level. Moderate would be somewhere between blue and yellow.

Still confused? The SCDNR uses four levels to indicate drought conditions. The first one, incipient drought, is more of a warning, if Mother Nature keeps acting up, we're going to have a drought.

The next level up is the moderate drought, which is where South Carolina is. Translation: The SCDNR is on this drought thing like the A-team, because if things stay dry the level is going to go to severe drought, level number three.

And that's when things get serious, like a heart attack. Water use restrictions are implemented and that's never fun. There's one final level called extreme drought, and let's just say the governor gets involved.

Now that you're informed about all levels of drought, it's not a bad time to take action. Conditions may be moderate today, but they may soon be severe. And it's never a bad idea to look into conservation methods. There's never going to be a way to prevent drought, that's all up to the Mama Nature, but taking action now will decrease how much we're impacted when things get serious.

Upstate Forever's John Tynan says there are several ways to "trim a lot of fat" especially when you start at the beginning.

For example, Tynan says you can install a rain barrel in your garden or start rain harvesting. The practice which is popular in the Northwest United States, has the homeowner using an outfitted 55-gallon barrel to capture the water which comes out of their downspout.

Spouts or a soaker hose are hooked up to the barrels to water the lawn or garden.

**FOR MORE WAYS
TO CONSERVE >>**

By Ana Parra, aparra@UpstateLink.com

3 LEVEL OF WATER CONSERVATION

Since we're still stuck on the whole level theme, here are different levels of conservation commitment.

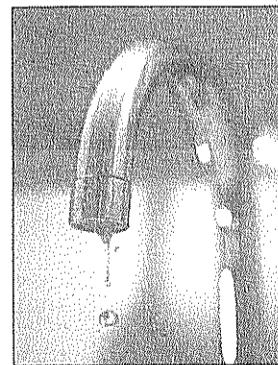
WATER WARRIOR



- Rain Barrels. You can buy these puppies off the Internet but there are also DIY models out there.
- Reuse bathtub water on lawn and gardens. You can also collect shower water and do the same.
- If you have an older toilet, replace it with a low-flush toilet. Tynan says most toilets are low-flush these days.
- Create a rain garden, Tynan says. "When it rains they take the run-off that comes off of your roof and comes off of your driveway and directs that into low lying areas that collect and capture storm water run-off and directs it into a little garden area that you've created specifically for that purpose which is then planted with native plants and requires a lot less maintenance."

AQUA ENFORCER:

- Take shorter showers.
- Make sure all the faucets in your home aren't leaking, including those outside.
- Turn your water on only when necessary when brushing your teeth, shaving or washing dishes.
- Get your car washed at a commercial car wash — you know, those car washes at gas stations that were like Disney rides when you were young.



H2O DEFENDER:

- Flush less. While this is fairly easy to do, it may require a significant lifestyle adjustment for some people. This little saying from the EPA may make help, "if it's yellow let it mellow and if it's brown flush it down."
- Plant native species in your garden. Tynan says plants native to the area are more accustomed to the climate patterns therefore they don't need as much watering.
- Use devices in your house that reduce water flow like faucet aerators, toilet dams or pressure regulators.
- Operate washers (dish and laundry) only when they're full.

Sources: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, John Tynan