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News

Master Gardner's discuss water conservation methods

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Ways to conserve water in the area were discussed at Thursday night's Lakelands Master Gardner meeting, as Ned Barrett and John Tynan, of Upstate Forever, were on hand to address about 100 residents about the use of rain barrels.

The barrels are designed to catch rainwater runoff from a house through gutters and downspouts. Once the water is collected, it can be used to water lawns, plants and flowers. With the current drought conditions, growing land used for development and problems with Lake Greenwood, Barrett and Tynan said the barrels can have an impact on the community.

Upstate Forever statistics show 50 percent of all water a household uses in the summer months is for lawn care. But with one inch of rainfall on a 1,000-square-foot surface yielding 600 gallons, Barrett said a 15-minute thunderstorm can provide enough water to fill a couple barrels per house.

While the collected water is not usable for drinking, Barrett said this should allow the barrels to provide enough water for lawn care for the entire summer.

"Right there, you have cut your summertime water usage in half," he said. "It may not seem like a lot for you to do alone, but just think if everyone used the barrels. You would have cut an entire community's water usage in half."

He added this would provide relief during water restrictions because of drought and help to conserve drinking water, which Barrett said could become an even more important resource with development growth and drought conditions.

Tynan said the rain barrels could also have an important affect on Lake Greenwood.

Upstate Forever has led a joint study with several agencies and universities over the last five years to study the lake.

The results of the study show the lake has lost billions of gallons of storage capacity because of 1 million cubic yards of sediment that has filtered into the lake over the last decade. The sediment has filtered in from the Reedy and Saluda rivers.

The high amounts of sediment have led to more phosphorus in the water that could create another algae bloom, such as the one in 1999.

Tynan said unless the amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus decrease, the lake will continue to have algae and less capacity, which could, in addition to affecting the lake and its inhabitants, also hurt property values and the local economy.

He recommended decreasing phosphorus and sediment levels by at least 25 percent to start reversing the trend. This can be done by less development growth and less water getting into the system from upstream wastewater treatment plants.

Water used from rain barrels could help with this, according to Tynan, as it would help use less water needed to be treated by the plants.

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