

BROWN LAWNS, DRY GARDENS

Water shortage impacts residential landowners

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H&N photo by Lee Juillerat Bob Laver installs drip lines to keep his 120 rose bushes and other garden flowers, berries and plants watered.

Bob Laver loves gardening.

His two-acre property off Frieda Avenue is a living testament to the pleasure he experiences being outside.

The yard is a virtual arboretum — filled with trees. Carefully tended sections are brightened with favorites grown for the flowers and sweet scent, including 120 rose bushes and numerous rhododendrons — including one that's 45 years old — along with azaleas, peonies, holly, ostrich and other ferns, laurels and dozens of other flowers and plants.

Laver keeps seasonally busy harvesting rhubarb, tomatoes, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, grapes, wild plums, thorn-less blackberries and other fruits and vegetables.

Trees abound. Only three — two apples and a black locust — were on the property when Laver, 80, and late wife, Shirlee, who died last month, moved in 52 years ago.

Over the years they planted 106 more: sugar pine, baby blue spruce, ponderosa pine, Engelmann spruce, redwood, Scotch pine and tamaracks.

Most years, Laver uses water from the Enterprise Irrigation District to irrigate his yard, including 10,000 square feet of lawn. But this year Enterprise irrigators aren't receiving any water because of the drought.

In 2001, when water was also cut off to Klamath Reclamation Project irrigators, Laver implemented water conservation measures.

This year he's stepping up the effort, hooking up drip lines and water timers to keep selected plants healthy. He's also bracing for bills that will likely be upward of \$200 a month — more than he pays for a season of irrigation water — because he and other Enterprise users must use city of Klamath Falls water.

"I've got to make some choices," Laver said. "It'll be interesting to see what my water bill is."

In 2001 he learned that it's better to not water lawns and established trees.

"You let the grass go dormant. If you don't do anything, it'll come back in the winter once it gets steady moisture."

Lawns that are only lightly watered can die from stress. Trees, he said, usually have deep enough roots to survive the season.

"We knew we weren't going to get any water," he said. "All we can do is try to conserve as best we can."

He's worried about what will and won't survive, but he has no qualms about water being saved for farmers and ranchers.

"I want the water to go to them. They're making a living," Laver said. "The farmers need the water and that's where it should go."

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