



El Toro Water District • Fall 2025

WATER VIEWS

SERVING THE PUBLIC, RESPECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

YOU CAN PREVENT FOG CLOGS THIS THANKSGIVING



Keep the festivities flowing when you gather with family and friends this year by keeping **FOG (fats, oils and grease)** out of your drain. Holiday cooking, baking and parties mean that FOG is often present in the kitchen, but pouring it down the drain can lead to clogged pipes and sewer blockages. These messy clogs can cause sewer backups that can damage your home and the environment.

What is FOG?

FOG refers to fats, oils and grease. Here are a few examples:



Gravy



Sour cream



Meat drippings



Salad dressing and mayonnaise



Bacon grease



Butter, margarine, shortening and lard



Cooking oil



How Can I Properly Dispose of FOG and Keep My Pipes Clean this Season?



- ▶ **COOL IT:** After cooking, allow FOG to cool. Then, pour it into a container, such as an empty can or jar, and dispose of it in your green waste container or in the trash if you do not have organic recycling in your area.
- ▶ **SCRAPE IT:** Scrape FOG off pots and pans before washing, and wipe pans and dishes with a paper towel before washing to remove residual grease.
- ▶ **WATCH OUT FOR WIPES:** Kitchen and bathroom cleanup is an important part of hosting, but even wipes marked “disposable” are not safe for our sewer system. Toss cleaning wipes, personal wipes, baby wipes and any other wipe products directly in the trash. Do not flush them down the toilet. The only thing safe to flush are the three Ps – pee, poop and (toilet) paper.



Join Us for the next ETWD Community Advisory Group Meeting

Mark your calendar for Wednesday, November 13th from 11:30 am - 1:30 pm! ETWD invites you to our quarterly Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting, where we'll share the latest updates on water, wastewater, and recycled water with our community. Lunch will be provided. **Scan the QR code to sign up for CAG Meeting.**



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FROM THIRSTY TURF TO WATER-WISE WONDER: A CUSTOMER'S LANDSCAPE TRANSFORMATION



A Success Story of Sustainability and Style

When Mr. and Mrs. Whitesell looked out at their lawn, they didn't just see grass—they saw an opportunity. With a vision of conservation and curb appeal, and support from ETWD staff, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the Municipal Water District of Orange County and the regional Water Use Efficiency Rebate Program, the Whitesells reinvented their landscape.

Turning Vision Into Reality

Over the course of six months, the Whitesells worked with a local designer/installer to create a vibrant, climate-friendly landscape. First, they removed their water-thirsty lawn and installed a weed barrier of mesh material to help suppress regrowth and set the stage for the new design. Next, they installed water-wise plants and a drip irrigation system to deliver the right amount of water to each plant type based on its needs.

A Diverse and Colorful Plant Palette

The new landscape features approximately 100 plants from 20 different species, selected for their low water use and vibrant aesthetic.

A sample of the plant palette includes:

- ▶ Penstemon
- ▶ Butterfly Bush
- ▶ Campanula
- ▶ Sedum Confusum
- ▶ Lavender Trumpet Vine
- ▶ Evolvulus 'Beach Bum Blue'
- ▶ Paprika Yarrow
- ▶ Mandevilla
- ▶ Bower Vine
- ▶ Crape Myrtle
- ▶ Agapanthus 'Baby Pete'
- ▶ Salvia 'Big Pink' (Autumn Sage)

These selections offer year-round color and habitat for pollinators and thrive in south Orange County's climate, reducing long-term maintenance needs.



Before



After

Design That Blends Beauty and Efficiency

The updated landscape includes flower beds bursting with seasonal blooms and a central area that utilizes bark mulch instead of turf—a creative and sustainable alternative that enhances visual texture and reduces runoff.

Rebates at Work

ETWD's partnership in the regional Water Use Efficiency Rebate Program helped the Whitesells offset the cost of removing turf and installing water-smart features. The program empowers customers to make eco-friendly changes and celebrates their creativity.

"We're proud of the yard we created," Mr. Whitesell said. "It looks beautiful, saves water, and fits our lifestyle."

ETWD applauds the Whitesells for their commitment to sustainability. "The Whitesells' efforts show how water stewardship and landscape beauty can go hand in hand," said Vu Chu, ETWD Water Resources Supervisor.

Ready to Transform Your Yard?

ETWD is here to help you save water, enhance your outdoor space, and make the most of available rebates. Whether you're dreaming of a drought-tolerant garden or a complete turf removal, we can connect you with resources and guidance to get started. Learn more at etwd.com/conservation/gardendesign or contact Vu Chu, ETWD Water Resource Supervisor, at VChu@etwd.com or (949) 837-7050 ext. 253.



REBATE SPOTLIGHT



Tree Rebate

Thinking about starting a turf replacement project? El Toro Water District customers participating in the Turf Replacement Program will be eligible for a Tree Rebate. This incentive provides \$100 per tree installed, with a maximum rebate of \$500 for up to 5 trees per turf replacement project. The Tree Rebate is not a standalone program. You must apply to the Turf Replacement Program to qualify. For more information on the program, please visit etwd.com/conservation/rebates.





FALL GARDEN GLOW UP



Fall is the best time to plant in Orange County, and ETWD can help you transform your yard!

Free Virtual Landscape Workshops

Refresh your landscape with free virtual workshops and classes in landscape design and irrigation principles to help you plant, care for and maintain a stunning, water efficient garden. The workshops are offered in partnership with Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and led by the Green Media Creations virtual instructors.

- Sign up at for upcoming workshops and view additional classes at etwd.com/conservation/landscape-workshops.

Landscape Design and Maintenance Assistance Programs

- Get landscape design and maintenance guide from a qualified professional. This program is free for turf removal rebate participants.
- Get started at etwd.com/conservation/gardendesign.

California Friendly Landscape Design Plans

- ETWD customers can access free OC friendly landscape designs.
- Learn more at etwd.com/conservation/gardendesign.

FLUORIDATION IN YOUR DRINKING WATER: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



Protecting public health and delivering safe, high-quality drinking water remains ETWD's highest priority. Community water fluoridation began in the U.S. in 1945, and today, about 72% of Americans served by community water systems receive fluoridated drinking water.

Fluoridation in California and Our Region

California law requires water systems with more than 10,000 service connections to fluoridate when funding is available. While ETWD does not interdependently add fluoride to the water, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWDSC) where our water comes from does. MWDSC began fluoridation in 2007 after approval by the California Department of Public Health.

Naturally occurring fluoride in drinking water amounts to .3 -.4 mg/L. MWDSC adjusts this fluoride level to the recommended optimum level of 0.7 milligrams per liter (mg/L)—a concentration shown to provide dental health benefits while remaining far below both state and federal safety limits. For comparison:

- ▶ U.S. EPA primary limit: 4.0 mg/L
- ▶ California limit: 2.0 mg/L

Safety and Scientific Review

This optimal U.S. level of 0.7 mg/L is well below both state and federal safety limits and is recognized as safe and effective by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health.

Looking Ahead

While some states have moved to ban or reconsider fluoridation, the State of California continues to support the practice as a key tool for improving oral health.

Our Commitment

ETWD is committed to delivering safe and reliable drinking water to our community. Your water continues to meet or surpasses all state and federal safety standards and we will continue to follow all state and federal regulations, monitoring any new water fluoridation developments and provide updates to our customers as needed.

For more information, please visit:



Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
Community Water Fluoridation FAQ:
<https://bit.ly/4fUD0mx>



Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
Fluoridation Facts: <https://bit.ly/4mZoPtN>



State Water Board's fluoridation page:
www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/drinkingwater/Fluoridation.html



IN THE COMMUNITY



Laguna Woods Village Third Mutual Gate 11 Meeting June 18

ETWD Staff hosted a booth at the Third Mutual Gate 11 Meeting in Clubhouse 1 on June 18, 2025.



Lake Forest National Night Out August 5

ETWD hosted a booth and distributed water with ETWD's water trailer at the City of Lake Forest National Night Out on Tuesday, August 5, 2025.



BEHIND THE SCENES AT ETWD

NEW EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Mark Roche MAINTENANCE WORKER I



Top priorities

Inspection, maintenance and operation of all equipment, generators and facilities related to ETWD's drinking water pump stations and sewer lift stations.

Tenure at ETWD

Mark started as an intern in collections in 2024 and was hired as a pump station crew member the following year.

Favorite parts of the job

Mark enjoys the people and the culture of teamwork and camaraderie at ETWD, along with the mechanical side of diagnosing and fixing problems with pumps and motors.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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The Board of Directors meeting takes place on the fourth Thursday of the month, and the Engineering and Finance Committee meets on the Monday before the Board of Directors meeting at 7:30 a.m. in person and via Zoom teleconference.

We encourage you to join us. Meeting agendas are posted on our website and include teleconference access and instructions. Learn more: etwd.com/governance/meetings-agendas-minutes

ETWD delivers drinking water, recycled water and wastewater services to customers in the City of Laguna Woods and portions of the cities of Lake Forest, Mission Viejo, Laguna Hills and Aliso Viejo

Have questions? Call us at (949) 837-7050 or email us at district@etwd.com.

