

THE FLOW

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Water in Quotes:

“Here is a land where life is written in water.”

- Colorado Poet Thomas Ferril



(Re) Introducing LISA: Lawn Irrigation Self Audit

State of Colorado—Our eyes are accustomed to greenery, at least that is what Edward Abby has said of the propensity of Americans to prefer green spaces to the drab sandy colors of deserts. This sentiment rings true for many, but not all. Yes, many individuals like to create a green carpet of grass. How many of you remember playing kickball, staring at clouds, or having a water fight on a nice patch of Kentucky bluegrass? I know I do. So it’s with good memories that many are reluctant to forego a water thirsty “crop” (yes, I’m calling Kentucky Blue a crop) that is not suited to a semi-arid or arid environment.

Recently, in places like Las Vegas and California, there has been a strong movement to remove turf lawns in favor of more drought tolerant plants suited to mesic environments. The government of these respective locations even offers incentives up to \$3.50 per square foot for the removal of turf. No such effort has yet taken root in Colorado, though the states new Water Plan does recognize the need

for municipal water conservation. As we all know, watering outdoor, water thirsty landscaping can consume relatively large quantities of water. For this reason, a team of water specialists from CSU developed the Lawn Irrigation Self Audit program.

LISA, as it is affectionately called, is a program that was introduced to the general public this year in April of 2016. Some of you may remember LISA

The program works like this: 13 Extension offices throughout the state signed up to “host” a LISA auditing kit. The kit contains everything necessary for a homeowner to audit their turf irrigation system. The process is easy and takes approximately 10–15 minutes per irrigation zone (some houses have 2 zones, some 9). Once the audit is complete, the homeowner will enter their collected data into a web-app that calculates the irrigation require-



LISA kit with contents —Perry Cabot

from a few years ago. That program lost a little steam, and the use of some proprietary software, so the group has gone back to the drawing board to introduce LISA 2.0!

ments for each month in the growing season. The web-app capitalizes on the vast network of CoAgMet stations to give homeowners an accurate value for expected turf water use. The

web-application also asks the homeowners a few key questions about the conditions of their lawn such as the amount of shade, proximity to trees, turf density, and soil type.

In the end, the homeowner will get a customized monthly lawn watering schedule from April—October.

If you have a LISA kit, the LISA team would like to thank you for being a host! If you are in an area that does not currently host a kit, but would like access to one, contact myself or Perry Cabot (the two project leads) and we can point you in the direction of the nearest kit (if applicable) or we can put you on a waiting list for when a kit becomes available.

Although water smart landscaping will likely be a bigger part of new home construction, we understand that some people just like lawns. They like the way they look, the way they feel, and the memories that go along with the smell of fresh cut grass. We set out to build an irrigation scheduling tool for lawns that allows homeowners to make better management decisions and increase the efficiency of lawn irrigation. And from that the LISA project was born. Without further adieu; meet LISA!

- END



Rain Barrels in Colorado: What's New?

State of Colorado— I'm sure, by now, many of you have seen a press release circulating through Extension stating CSU has a newly unveiled Rain Barrel fact sheet. Take note, this fact sheet is very informative and should be a great reference for most of the questions you will likely get from your constituents.

Until this past Thursday (May 12th) it was illegal in Colorado (except in a very few limited cases) to collect and store rainwater. Now, it is legal for homeowners to collect and store up to 110 gallons of rain water in two 55 gallon containers. The legislative bill allowing rain water collection did not slide easily through, like a kid on a steep water slide. On the contrary, the bill was tabled at the end of the 2015 legislative session over concerns of some that said it had the possibility of injuring senior water rights users, something forbidden and completely against the doctrine of prior appropriation. However, a study conducted by CSU led some campus faculty to testify in the halls of the legislatures. This study found rain barrels would have a negligible affect on the prior appropriation system for a number of reasons. This year, legislators were able to strike a compromise that will allow homeowners to collect and store rainwater.

The compromises come in the form of conditions and limits. Rain barrels can only be installed on single and multi-family households

with four or fewer units. The water can only be collected from the rooftop of the residential unit, or dwelling, and must be limited to 2 collection vessels that do not exceed a combined capacity of 110 gallons. The water *must* be used for outdoor purposes only, which includes watering a lawn or garden. If you're worried about the effects of

least once a month.

The authors of the fact sheet, and House Bill 16-1005 itself, are clear in stating that the collection of rainwater does not, in any way, constitute a water right. Therefore, the use of the rain barrels can be controlled by the State of Colorado and the State Engineer has the authority to curtail the collec-



Rain barrel system with properly sealed lid — Creative Commons

breeding mosquitos, the language of House Bill 16-1005 specifically addresses this concern. Under the law, the containers must have a sealable lid. But as well all know, tiny mosquitos can make their way into otherwise isolated spaces. For this reason, the authors of the CSU fact sheet suggest completely emptying the rain barrels at

tion of rainwater if senior water rights are not satisfied. Under the new law, homeowners will not need to obtain a permit to collect rain water from their downspouts. However, homeowners must be aware of the limitations to rainwater harvesting and how to properly store the water to reduce mosquitos and ensure water quality.