



Physical address:

522 Impala Road, Glenvista 2058
South Africa

Tel: +27 (0)11 682 0911

Customer Service Centre: 0860 10 10 60

customerservice@randwater.co.za

Physical address:

Unit 13, Lanseria Business Park
Lanseria, 1739

Postal address:

P.O. Box 514
Halfway House
1685

15 August 2023

**Joint statement
Rand Water and South African Green Industries Council (SAGIC)**

Joint water conservation efforts to be promoted by Rand Water, SAGIC and green industry alliance associations

Water conservation is an important element of water supply planning and necessitates the responsible use of water, using water wise efficiency improvement mechanisms.

Water conservation is essential in South Africa, a water scarce country. This is owing to an arid to semi-arid climate and below average annual rainfall of 465mm compared with the global annual average of 860mm. Thus, South Africa is ranked the 40th driest country in the world.

Water challenges

Conservation efforts and the responsible use of water need to take place against a host of challenges.

- The country's growing population and their wide range of water use in daily activities
- The impact of anthropogenic development on climate change
- Seasonal climate variations brought about by El Niño and La Niño.

The need to use water responsibly and conserve water is essential in a world where scientists are predicting more erratic rainfall and drier seasons. Furthermore, climate models forecast the number of dangerously hot weather days will double over half of the country. This suggests that South Africa on average will be hotter and drier, thereby placing strain on the country's already perilous freshwater resources, and impacting negatively on livestock, agriculture, human health, and biodiversity.

Notwithstanding that many of the dams within the Rand Water supply area, and beyond, are at very high levels, water remains a commodity that must be nurtured and protected. The latest three-month forecast from the South African Weather Service (July 2023) suggests that a strong El Niño will impact Southern African rainfall negatively this summer. Added to this, water infrastructure across the country is under strain due to a variety of reasons.

Against this backdrop, it is critical for all industries, including the green industries, to use water responsibly and conserve as much water as possible, to ensure the long-term security of water supply.

Importance of green spaces

SAGIC is an umbrella organisation for alliance member organisations that represent wholesale nurseries, retail garden centres, golf courses, sports turf, landscaping, power products and equipment. Studies show that the green industries are enormously valuable to the economy. Furthermore, green spaces, parks, landscapes and gardens contribute to livelihoods, people's wellbeing and mental health.

It is also understood that the entire green industry takes a huge knock at the mention, to end users, of drought and water restrictions. The impact is not only felt by wholesale plant nurseries and garden centre retailers, but also by the landscaping industry.

This notwithstanding, Rand Water witnesses an annual spike in water demand during spring and early summer. This places a huge strain on the water reticulation systems for all suppliers.

The spike in water demand appears to be related to increased water use in Gauteng landscapes and gardens prior to the arrival of the summer rains. A proportion of this can be attributed to gardeners, landscapers and food producers watering to encourage new plant growth (including lawns) or to start early vegetable production.

Water responsibly

This season, Rand Water and SAGIC undertake to not only attempt to reduce the spike in water use in spring and summer, but also to encourage the responsible and judicious use of water.

It is hoped that this joint alliance will not only reduce the potential strain on water supply, but will also assist with compliance to the water use license allocations and reduce future impact on water reserves in our storage dams, especially if a strong El Niño does develop as anticipated.

Three decades of water wise marketing

Rand Water and SAGIC therefore appeal to South Africans to educate employees, employers, clients, visitors, and customers on the wise and responsible use of water. As part of this joint commitment, Rand Water's Water Wise team have worked with SAGIC and its alliance partners for nearly three decades on producing environmentally responsible, water wise marketing materials.

Numerous campaigns and a range of educational material have been produced both individually and jointly. The success of these have been difficult to measure when linked to specific water use reduction, although the Water Wise brand is now commonly used across green industry websites and in a range of online social media. (See www.waterwise.co.za, www.lifeisagarden.co.za, www.sana.co.za, www.sali.co.za)

It is also evident that SAGIC members have implemented many changes within their individual membership requirements to encourage water wise practices amongst their membership. The benefits have in turn, been passed on South African consumers.

Become a water wise water warrior

This notwithstanding, there remains much to be done to reduce the existing water use curve in spring and early summer.

- SAGIC members, such as the South African Nursery Association (SANA) have launched a host of 'water warrior' initiatives which will be rolled out across the spring and summer season (2023/24).
- Rand Water, through its Water Wise team is committed to continue with research, developing and producing new relevant and innovative information for both green industry businesses and end users.

These efforts and collaborations will, as in the past, continue to include Rand Water, SAGIC and its member organisations.

To this end, it is crucial that efforts to reduce water use in gardens and landscapes owned, managed, or influenced (directly or indirectly) by SAGIC member organisations be ramped up for this coming season.

Delay watering lawns

The Water Wise team also strongly encourage business and end users to actively delay in using water on lawns this spring. Using water responsibly and wisely in the landscape as well as implementing water wise practices will be an important strategy going forward.

Installing irrigation raincheck units, adjusting watering times and practices to early morning and late evening, utilising grey water, as well as adding organic material to the soil, composting, hydrozoning, and water harvesting will also be important strategies going forward.

Summary

Engagements between Rand Water, SAGIC and the SA Local Government Association (SALGA) will continue to encourage water wise education, job-friendly irrigation times in municipal bylaws and responsible wording when organs of state require reduced water use.

It is also hoped that the individual and joint efforts of Rand Water, SAGIC and its member associations across the green sector will be a positive engagement that will yield positive results.

The primary challenge this season will be to encourage and activate a downward turn in the annual spring water use spike. It is also hoped that the public and private sector will be influenced to find new and innovative ways to reduce water use and use water responsibly this season, while still maintaining their businesses, gardens, parks and landscapes to a high standard.
