



Area builder rethinks yard landscaping

By Brandi Hart, McKinney Courier-Gazette

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PROSPER - The drought that has turned the land of North Texas to dry, parched and cracked plains is causing some homebuilders to rethink how they landscape yards.

As water continues to recede in lakes in Dallas and Fort Worth and surrounding suburbs, Newport Homebuilders is giving homeowners a way to save money on their water bills and conserving Lake Lavon water as well at its homes in the Greenspoint subdivision in Prosper.

Newport Homebuilders is using an evapotranspiration controller, or ET drip irrigation system that has a weather and temperature sensor that can detect rain, humidity levels, dew point, or any amount of moisture in the air so it doesn't waste water. The water is released throughout the property with hose from Netafim USA of Fresno, Calif., that has drip holes every 18 inches. The Netafim ET system releases 0.4 gallons of water per minute, as opposed to the three gallons of water per minute that most other irrigation systems release, said licensed irrigator Tony Rizo, of Organic Option Inc., during a demonstration Friday afternoon at the Newport Homebuilders model home at 2571 Townlake Drive in Prosper.

The system is also installed along the walkway, or sidewalks, which should prevent water from pouring onto the curb and street like some other irrigation systems do, Rizo said. The ET drip irrigation system will save homeowners 30 to 40 percent more water than the average home, Rizo said.

Byron Beall, the water management specialist with Ewing, the Plano irrigation company that distributes the ET drip irrigation system, said the system costs approximately 30 percent more than the average system, but it will pay for itself within 24 months.

Newport Homebuilders President Kent LeSueur is choosing to install the water-saving irrigation system and using native plants that require less water to be proactive as the drought continues throughout the area, he said.

"I have a model home in Lucas that has no landscaping on it and hasn't had any for four months. The objective, 'What can we do that can be proactive?' and we saw this as a great opportunity. There needs to be more education to the public about water conservation and it took something like this (the drought) to open our eyes," LeSueur said.

Denise Hickey, spokesperson for the North Texas Municipal Water District, which controls

the drinking water supply for Prosper and all of the cities in Collin County, hopes more homebuilders choose irrigation systems that save water, as the North Texas area has suffered from a drought since April 2005. The NTMWD is on Stage 3 of its water conservation plan and its member cities have implemented water conservation methods and limited water times to help conserve water.

Hickey also said people need to be educated on ways to conserve water, as it affects all cities in the NTMWD. The NTMWD supplies drinking water to all cities in Collin County and Rockwall County, as well as Mesquite, Garland and Forney. The water district will soon get water from Lake Tawakoni in Hunt County, and is looking at other options if the drought continues.

"We have a contract with the Sabine Creek River Authority and are looking at using water from Lake Tawakoni, but it wouldn't go online until January 2008," Hickey said.

Even though the district is working to secure more water, Hickey wants people to remember to practice conservation measures as there is only so much water available, she said.

To learn how to help conserve water, visit the NTMWD's Web site at www.ntmwd.com.

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