



Orpington Pond in Kent

## What the Environment Agency has to say -

The Environment Agency is responsible for protecting the environment by minimising the impact of drought, while ensuring there is enough water for people. The agency ensures that water companies have effective plans in place to maintain public water supplies during a drought, without damaging the environment.

Stuart Sampson, Drought Coordinator for the Environment Agency, told me: "Golf courses need to contact their local water company to find out if restrictions apply (if water is being taken from the public water supply). Or, at the moment there are no formal abstraction restrictions in place (eg if you are using an abstractor licensed to take water from the environment)."

Stuart gave this advice for greenkeepers:

- Is irrigation confined only to crucial areas of play? Set water priority areas to identify those requiring little or no supplementary irrigation i.e. water greens but not fairways and certainly not roughs!
- Introduce regular checking and repair system for leaks, faulty sprinkler heads etc.
- Choose irrigation times carefully; for example avoid irrigating in windy conditions and during daytime.

- Consider harvesting rainwater from car parks/ buildings for watering plants.
- Check for and mend dripping taps and water leaks.
- Use drought-tolerant plants and mulch in landscaping areas.
- Grass is very hardy and even if it turns brown it will recover quickly when the rain arrives. Also consider drought tolerant grass varieties for playing areas/course.
- Consider stopping vehicle washing.

Greenkeepers wishing to take more than 20 cubic metres of water a day from an underground source, for example a borehole or well, or from a river or stream, need to obtain an abstraction licence from the Environment Agency. Stuart Sampson said: "There are no abstraction restrictions in place. Most abstraction licences have conditions that will mean the abstractor must stop taking water once a certain level or flow has been reached. - this is to protect the environment. The abstractor should be aware of the conditions."