

Home & Heart



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“**W**hiskey’s for drinking, water’s for fighting.” Mark Twain said this, and he was in California when he said it. The drought here continues to parch everything in our county and many others. Our creek is long dried up. Our well is putting out water in the morning and empties by early afternoon.

I have lost two rose bushes, a Brother Cadfael and a Barbara Bush. We also lost a cherry tree. I let all the strawberries die. We only water the tomatoes and corn in the garden. Soon the corn will be over for the season and we can stop watering it.

Everything is on drip irrigation: all the fruit trees, all the lavender plants, the grape arbor, and the rose bushes. There are a few potted plants in the front yard that I water by hand with dishwater. I never thought it would be hard to keep comfrey, mint, and horseradish alive.

We have a small, battery-powered kitchen timer that we use when watering. All watering is timed. All the drippers are on a rotating schedule. Our yard is an oasis of green in a dry, brown and gold landscape.

It became dry so fast this spring that even the star thistle did not grow. My bees have suffered a dearth of nectar. I found them sucking the juice out of the ripening grapes in the arbor. I am feeding them syrup (2 to 1 sugar and water) to prepare them for winter. This is not going to be a good year to evaluate my solar hive ventilator.

The weather has been very hot. With our downslope, down canyon winds every day, you can see the leaves curl on the trees in the afternoons. The hot air sucks the moisture out of any leaves open to the breeze. I planted two climbing Cecile Brunner roses on the north side of our garden as a windbreak, to protect the plants there.

Brown Goats

This year we finished putting in a 6 foot (1.8 m) fence around ten acres of property surrounding our house. This kept the deer out until now. We call them brown goats, since they are browsers like goats, and will strip any plant of its foliage in a night if they can stand on their hind legs and reach it.

We returned from a trip to find all the grapes that had been hanging down in the arbor gone. I heard a noise the other night, and went out on the porch and saw a four-point buck stepping delicately from the arbor, heading toward our big, old apple tree. All the fallen apples under the trees were gone. Our apple trees have had a dramatic fruit drop due to drought. I narrowly saved a Kaffir lime tree by bringing it into the house. It had just few leaves nibbled on.

Water-Sipping Washing Machine

The second summer after moving to the creek, we experienced our first drought. The creek dried up, the spring that fed the house water system dried up, and we had to haul water. That was the year we drilled a well.

Since water could so obviously be an issue at this house, we did everything we could to cut our water usage. We bought and installed a one pint flush toilet made by SeaLand. We did not take baths, only showers. And I began a search for a water efficient washing machine.

A few years later, I bought a Staber washing machine. At the time, it was the only super efficient washing machine on the market. There is a full review of this machine as a *Things That Work!* in *HP47*. I have run my machine since 1995 without problems. Once a belt broke, and Staber immediately sent a replacement.

Washed Up

Well, just recently, we were leaving on a ten day trip. I thought I would do several loads of laundry, since the water system would have time to recharge while we were gone. The first load I did was a quilt. Not a thick quilt, but a queen-sized quilt, nonetheless. I have washed quilts many times before without a hitch.

When I went to the basement to take the quilt to the clothesline (solar powered clothes dryer), the tub still had water in it. The tub was not full because a horizontal-axis washer uses less than half the water of a regular washer.

I thought, “Oh, no. I’ve broken it this time.” I took the quilt out and laboriously rinsed it in the deep cement sink next to the washer. Then I hung it on the line to dry. I dipped as much water as I could out of the tub. After I

had done that, the tub would “fill” again but the pump that drains the tub simply would not work.

One of the things I really like about the Staber is that the front panel easily comes off and you can work on the machine without having to move it from the wall. I unplugged it and opened the front by removing three screws. One thing my dad taught me was that if something doesn't run, the first thing you do is lift the hood (or remove the panel) and see if all wires are connected and not loose. I did that. Everything looked good.

The next morning, I called Staber and explained the symptoms. A really nice guy at the other end had an answer. You see, the pump safeguards itself. If any foreign object gets to the pump, it will not run, thereby saving its life. The guy told me how to remove a hose connected to the pump and reach my finger in there. It should turn a quarter turn, pause, and then turn a quarter turn again.

I returned to the basement. Since I could not get all the water out of the tub by dipping with a plastic cup, I put a large bedspread under the pump to catch the inevitable water. About a gallon came out after I disconnected the hose.

I reached my finger into the pump and pulled out a three-and-a-half-inch long, sixteen penny nail! I couldn't believe it. How did that get in there? I stuck my finger in again and came out with a shiny dime. That must have been my tip.

I put the hose back on and replaced the front panel. My Staber washer has worked flawlessly since then. I was happy to be able to work on my machine and fix it myself without bothering Bob-O about it. I think it was very smart of Staber to design a pump that can defend itself. I can be pretty tough on appliances and watches, so I just love anything that can stand up to life with me, including Bob-O.

Rats!

I have just heard that the Vermin-X electronic pest repellents that I wrote about in *Home & Heart*, HP84 do not work on modified square wave power. The insidious thing is that they work for about a day and then choke. Weitech has received several calls confirming this. They had no idea that this would happen, since they weren't really aware of a market for their product in the renewable energy sector until after my review. There's another good reason to get a sine wave inverter if you can afford it.

Access

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