

[Login](#) [Subscribe](#)

## Local News

Saturday, February 18, 2023

### Drop by drop, Vivian Zoe saves water



Vivian Zoe checks on her plants as she waters them at her home in Ledyard Sunday, Dec. 18, 2022. Zoe does what she can to conserve water, collecting in buckets when it rains and runoff in the shower. (Sarah Gordon/The Day)

[Buy Photo Reprints](#)

December 31, 2022 3:39 pm

By **Bridget Shirvell**

The child of German refugees who survived a concentration camp and the Holocaust, Vivian Zoe grew up wasting nothing. Her parents grew their own food and saved and reused what they could, instilling a mindset she follows today.

"I'm sure as a kid I was much less aware of it, but it sort of sunk in without me even knowing," Zoe said.

Zoe, who lives in Ledyard, attempts not to waste natural resources within her home — starting with water.

Water is the first thing you notice upon stepping into Zoe's kitchen, which boosts river views.

"It's great to watch the wildlife," Zoe said. "In the summer, it's very enclosed and shady and you can't see the river but in the winter it opens all up. I've been watching an osprey hunt all morning."

The second thing you notice is the plants that line Zoe's kitchen windowsill. They're simply a few of the numerous plants she has indoors and out, and one of the reasons she collects water that many wouldn't think twice about sending down the drain.

She saves both water from her shower and also, depending on the type of rinse and soap she's using, water from washing fruit and vegetables.

While outfitting homes with rain barrels that increasingly popular, rain barrels only work if

Connecticut, have seen droughts. Zoe uses the water she collects primarily from the shower to give her houseplants, outdoor perennials and shrubs a drink.

"I tell people about it and they think I'm nuts," Zoe said, adding that she recalls reading an article many years ago about how the next wars will not be about borders but will be about water and thinking then we need to conserve.

Shower buckets have long been common in parts of the world where water is scarce. People, like Zoe, use them to collect clean water from the shower for use around the house such as to water plants, wash muddy boots, and refill a birdbath. The trickiest part is often not spilling the water when you're taking the bucket out of the shower.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the average shower, which lasts about eight minutes, uses a little more than 16 gallons of water. That translates to more than one trillion gallons of water used yearly in the U.S. for showering.

More than simply conserving water, though, Zoe chooses plants based partly on how much water they will need to thrive.

"I planted catmint, which is resistant to drought, resistant to cold and heat and the deer don't like them," Zoe said. "It's always a work in progress though. The curve of my driveway used to be all hostas but together with the drought and the deer they got decimated this year. I dug them all up and planted them in the back where it will be shadier."

When necessary, Zoe will also ration water for her plants.

"You need not water your lawn," Zoe wrote on a post about water conservation tips on NextDoor where I first met her. "It will always come back. It's your shrubs, trees and some perennials."

Water and climate change are inextricably intertwined, but while news about droughts, changes in precipitation and sea level rise tend to steal headlines, water use also exacerbates the climate crisis. It takes energy to move, treat and use water, and that energy is responsible for more than 5 percent of the U.S.'s overall carbon emissions every year, according to research by BBC Future.

According to the EPA, a faucet that runs warm water for about five minutes uses about as much energy as a 60-watt light bulb in 14 hours. Water and greenhouse gas-producing electricity are also incredibly linked. That's in part because water is used to cool power plants. According to the EPA, it takes up to 6,000 gallons of water to power one light bulb 12 hours a day for a year.

### **'Faith in the youth of this world'**

When she bought her home six years ago, Zoe wanted to divest from fossil fuels entirely.

"Everything I do, I think about not only for the environment but also for my pocketbook," Zoe said.

She took advantage of some of the state programs and rebates around green energy and energy efficiency, spending a year doing a gut rehab of her home. Walls came out, the oil-burning furnace, which was leaking, was removed, and mini splits, a heat pump water heater and solar panels were added.

"I didn't want any fossil fuels," said Zoe. "I'd have to be an idiot to need new heating and cooling and decide I was going to have natural gas or oil, if I could afford to get rid of them."

Despite growing up in a household that saved and reused as much as possible, Zoe is quick to point out that much of what she does, whether it be the plants she places in her garden or the water she tries to save, are things she's still learning to do and constantly evolving.

"I have tremendous faith in the youth of this world and fingers crossed that they will keep at it and not give up and not let the adults who have mucked things get away with it and continue to ignore them and push them aside," Zoe said.

#### **5 tips for conserving water**

1. Use a shower bucket, a container in your shower, where you can collect clean water; you don't want to get soap or shampoo in it unless you're sure the chemicals in your soap and shampoo won't hurt your plants.
2. Try shaving a minute or three off your shower.
3. Stop watering your lawn.
4. Only wash full loads of laundry and use cold water.
5. Install a rain barrel on your downspout.

*What changes - big or small - have you made  
or send an email to [t.cotter@theday.com](mailto:t.cotter@theday.com).*

Comment threads are monitored for 48 hours aft

## READER COMMENTS

**George Tryon** January 1, 2023 at 15:49[Report](#)

Well said Dean.

**Dean A Morse** January 1, 2023 at 12:54[Report](#)

Sometimes, the changes we seek, start with YOU. One can make excuses all day long as to why not do something. But what really matters is what You do. You make the difference. No one else. If you decide to wait for someone else to act, then nothing gets done. Ideally, everyone should be concerned, as Vivian is. She is not waiting for another country to act. She makes the difference. And so can You.

**MARIAN AUSTIN** January 1, 2023 at 08:03[Report](#)

I agree with Rick and Thomas.

**Rick Beaney** January 1, 2023 at 02:38[Report](#)

I agree with Thomases comment for the most part. But, until the other industrialized countries even attempt to address climate change, all of this means nothing.

**Susan Menghi** December 31, 2022 at 21:05[Report](#)

Regarding water and laundry, I do my laundry for the week at the laundromat. I use the big machines filled to the max and always use cold water. This way I'm only using water and energy for the dryers one time a week versus smaller loads more often during the week. It's a time saver too because I get it done in about 3 hours and don't have to think about it for another 7 days!

**THOMAS COUSER** December 31, 2022 at 19:11[Report](#)

I repeat: These are admirable people doing good things, fine role models. But let's not pretend that any of this will have any appreciable impact. Arresting climate change will require structural changes in our economy and our way of life. There's a danger that ordinary citizens think that they are making a difference. The US military is one of the world's greatest polluters, yet we pass ever greater "defense" budgets.

Defund "Defense"

Defend the Earth

**Dean A Morse** December 31, 2022 at 15:02[Report](#)

Ms Zoe, You are so correct about the future regarding our planets most precious resource. Global warming/climate change across the globe will change how we live. And as we see the current results of the changes in our weather patterns, we will continue to see more extreme events, and drought will be among the most destructive forces that will lead to loss of agricultural systems, manufacturing, right down to our daily lives when we awake in the morning. Unfortunately, there are far more people who will continue to ignore, make excuses, and simply deny the facts of how we live have had a major impact on the environment we call home. The future generations will have their work cut out for them, that is a certainty. I do commend you for your efforts Vivian, I hope others make an honest effort to follow your lead.

## STORIES THAT MAY INTEREST YOU



### Stonington's Mooney ties record and wins State Open 55 hurdles

New Haven — Stonington's Joshua Mooney tied an 18-year-old record held by another former Eastern Connecticut Conference great to win the State Open title in the boys' 55-meter hurdles on Saturday. The...



### Jimmy Carter, 39th U.S. president, enters hospice care at home

ATLANTA (AP) — Former President Jimmy Carter, who at 98 years old is the longest-lived American president, has entered home hospice care in Plains, Ga., a statement from The Carter Center confirmed Sa...



### Together for some family time

Groton — Andy Ventura Molina, right, of New London, spent time Friday showing his father, Manny Ventura, left, and mother, Leonor Molina, of North Bergen, N.J., and his sister, Aryina Ventura, of Seve...



### Jones 'grateful' to stay with Sun

Brionna Jones gradually built herself into a WNBA All-Star by mastering moves around the rim and becoming one of the league's top defensive posts. Lately, the Connecticut Sun center has been working o...

▲ [Back To Top](#)

## About The Day

### The Day Publishing Company

47 Eugene O'Neill Drive

P.O. Box 1231

New London, CT 06320-1231 USA

### Staff Profiles

[President/Publisher](#) [Newsroom](#) [Advertising/Marketing](#)

[FAQs](#) [Jobs at The Day](#) [Contact Us](#)

### Connect With Us



### Quick Links

[E-Paper](#) [Contests](#) [Horoscopes](#) [Puzzles](#) [TV](#)

[Calendar](#) [Milestones](#) [Newsletters](#)

### Advertising

[About Our Ads](#) [Advertise](#) [Place A Classified Ad](#) [Contacts](#)

[Find New London Area Jobs](#) [Business Directory](#)

### Services

[Photo Reprints](#) [Privacy Policy/Terms](#) [RSS](#) [Text/SMS Alerts](#)