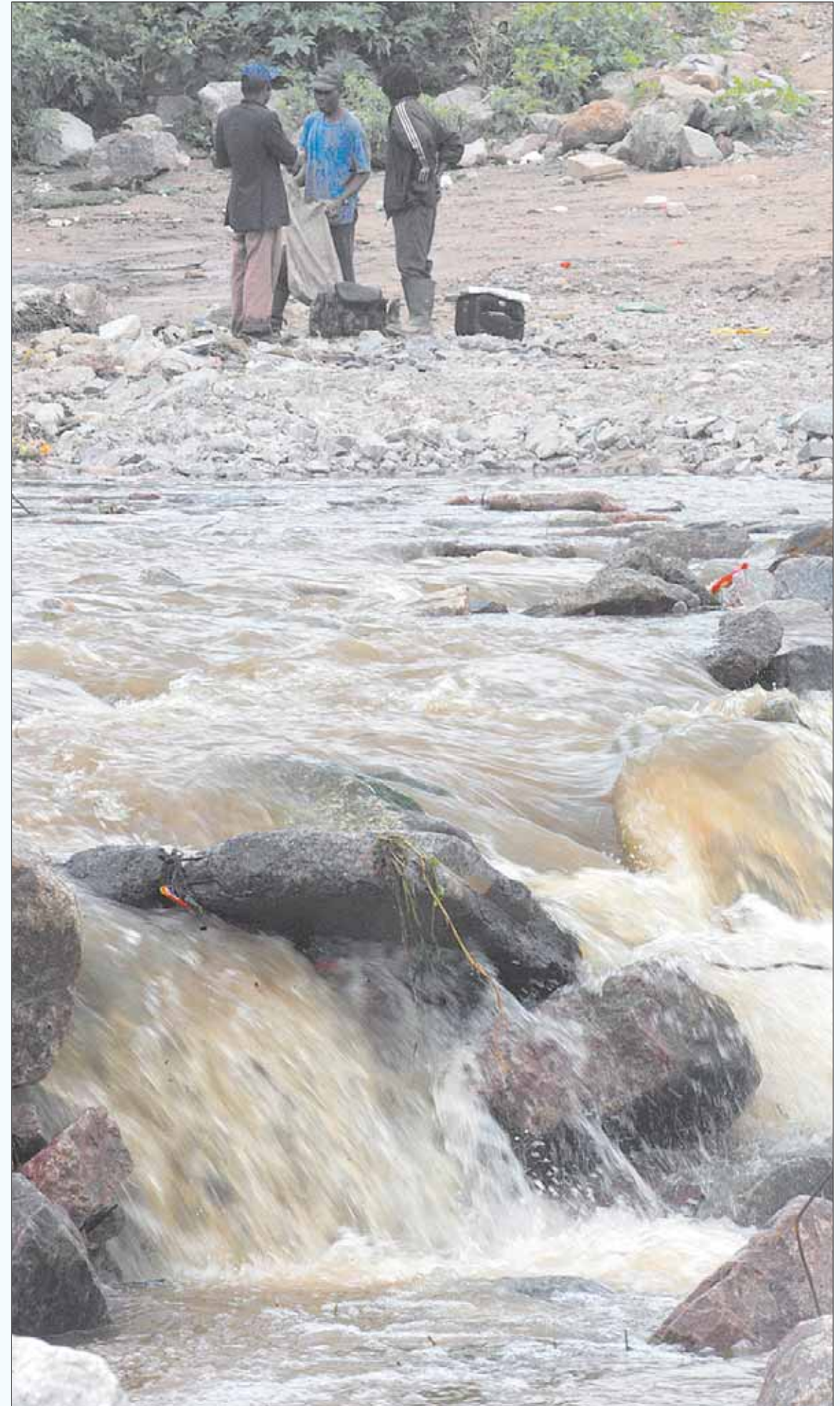


**SAFE AND SOUND:** When nobody is swimming, place a cover over your swimming pool as this prevents water loss through evaporation.



**BEING WATER-WISE, CLEANING UP POLLUTED RIVERS:** An estimated two million tons of waste is dumped into rivers, lakes and streams every day. This has resulted in an estimated 12 000km<sup>3</sup> of polluted water worldwide. If pollution from pollutants such as raw sewage, eroded soil, industrial poisons, acid emissions, toxic sludge, heavy metals, pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, fertilisers, nitrates, and solvents keeps pace with population growth, the world will effectively lose 18 000km<sup>3</sup> of freshwater by 2050.

## What YOU can do

**ENJOYING OUR BLUE PLANET:** Three-quarters of Earth's surface is covered by water. However, most water is held in deep ocean basins with only 3% being fresh. Of this tiny fraction, almost 70% is frozen in glaciers, permanent snow cover, ice and permafrost, while 30% is found in the hidden caverns of underground aquifers. This leaves less than 1% of the world's fresh-water reserves available for the combined usage of people, animals, birds and plants.



- ❖ Check and repair all water leaks – water losses through leaking pipes and evaporation are as high as 50% in South Africa.
- ❖ Re-use your bath or shower water to water the garden, wash your car or even flush the toilet. Take care, however, to avoid using grey water on edible crops. A good rule of thumb is that the colder water is before it leaves the house the better.
- ❖ Collect rainwater in tanks or containers to water plants.
- ❖ Place a "hippo" bag or water-filled two-litre plastic bottle in the toilet cistern.
- ❖ Take a short shower instead of a bath and install low-flow showerheads, pressure reducers and aerators. If you don't have a shower take shallow baths and let children bath together.
- ❖ Fit a new building with water saving devices, such as dual flushing toilet systems and water-saving urinals.
- ❖ Remember not to leave taps dripping – every drop counts.
- ❖ Don't leave the tap running when brushing your teeth or shaving.
- ❖ While waiting for cold water to turn hot, use a plug so that you can use this water later or divert it into a bucket for use elsewhere.
- ❖ Put the plug in when washing hands, dishes or vegetables.
- ❖ Avoid rinsing your dishes in the sink before loading them into the dishwasher. If you feel the need to clean dishes before loading rather scrape them.
- ❖ Choose new appliances carefully as a front-loading washing machine, for example, can use up to 40% less water than a top-loading model.
- ❖ Use washing machines and dishwashers when there is a full load.
- ❖ Instead of defrosting food under running water, leave it out of the freezer for a few hours. Defrost seafood inside the fridge overnight.
- ❖ Choose biodegradable laundry detergents that are low in phosphorus.
- ❖ Boil just the water you need when making a cup of tea and install low energy bulbs and better insulation as saving electricity means saving water.
- ❖ Plant a water-wise garden or group plants according to their water needs.
- ❖ Hold water around plant roots by making basins around trees and shrubs. On slopes, make terraces or pockets to hold water and slow run-off.
- ❖ Be conscientious about adhering to water restrictions even if you have a well point or borehole, and even better, stick to water restrictions even when they are not being enforced.
- ❖ Avoid watering during the heat of the day or in windy conditions, as evaporation rates are high then. Watering in the morning decreases the chance of mildew.
- ❖ Water deeply but less often – deep soakings encourage roots to grow deeper and to utilise moisture deep in the ground which helps them to survive in times of drought.
- ❖ Think of subsurface or drip watering systems. Drip irrigation gets water right to the root of a plant, using 25% less water than normal irrigation systems and can be placed under lawns.
- ❖ Mulch your garden by covering soil with a thick layer of bark, compost, straw, grass cuttings, manure, leaves, nut shells or shredded newspaper, which will not only improve soil health, it will increase water-holding capacity.
- ❖ As lawns are water-intensive, consider reducing your lawn area or use tougher, low water lawn types such as Buffalo grass (coastal areas) or Kweek

- (inland) rather than Kikuyu.
- ❖ Harvest water from gutters into water tanks, clean drums or large buckets, remembering to cover them to reduce water loss through evaporation.
- ❖ Place a cover over your swimming pool as this prevents water loss through evaporation.
- ❖ Remove invasive plants – aliens compete for water, light, space and nutrients with indigenous plants.

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The next title in the series will be: Deforestation and Biodiversity. Contact Carole Knight at 021 855 2982 for further information

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