

Tuesday, May 1, 1990

Campus water fountains in need of repairs

Student abuse, weather and construction cause yearly damages

By SEAN FRERKING
Of The Battalion Staff

Water fountains around the Texas A&M campus have run dry because of damage sustained throughout the year by weather, construction and students.

Joe Conway, building construction superintendent, said the fountain in front of the Chemistry Building and the water work located near Legett Hall are subject to much abuse.

He said student activities and poor weather often force maintenance crews to repair the fountains.

Tony Lapaglia, area maintenance foreman, said the Chemistry Building fountain was damaged during last year's Elephant Walk.

Lapaglia said the number of students jumping in the fountains caused some minor damage.

"They (students) knocked off some bricks near the top of the fountain," Lapaglia said. "They broke some of the sprinklers in the pool area, too."

He said the maintenance crews intend to repair the broken plumbing.

They also are planning to sandblast and replace the broken bricks in the fountain area, he said. With the repairs, the fountain soon should be running.

Both Conway and Lapaglia said they do not know the cost of the repairs to the fountain. Both said, however, no actions are planned to prevent further damage during future Elephant Walks.

Lapaglia said the fountain near Legett Hall, known as the Fish Pond, also needs extensive cleaning after Elephant Walk.

"The fountain in Fish Pond gets really dirty, but it just needs a good cleaning afterwards," Lapaglia said.

He said the Fish Pond fountain only runs during football season because the lack of students and activities during spring or summer semesters doesn't merit the fountain's use.

The fountain is drained and cleaned on the Friday before every

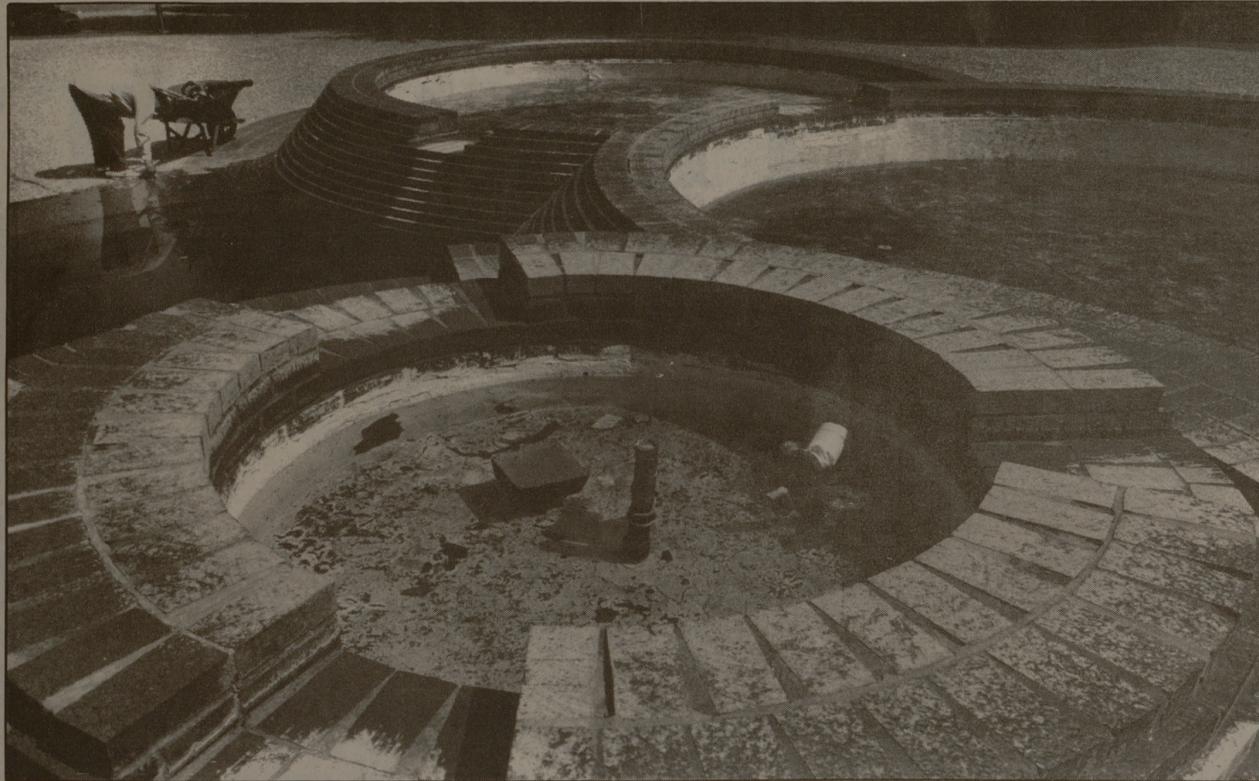


Photo by Scott D. Weaver

Nellie Pittman, an employee for Texas A&M's ground maintenance department, cleans up around the chemistry fountain.

home game, and the tradition of throwing yell leaders into the pond after a victory doesn't harm the fountain, he said.

Conway said the fountain near the MSC usually doesn't need much

maintenance and will be turned on when the MSC expansion is finished.

The fountains near the Chemistry Building, Legett Hall and the MSC are cleaned and maintained by A&M maintenance crews.

The remaining fountain on campus is the Hansen Memorial Fountain in front of the Clayton Williams Alumni Center.

The fountain's custodial maintenance is funded by the center's general building fund.

Ray Martin, the center's facility manager, said a mechanical engineering student acts as an independent contractor and cleans the fountain as well as the Texas A&M seal, which was a gift from the Class of '50.

Alternative landscaping saves water

By DON HERMON
Special to the Battalion

After dry summers of withering landscape and increased water bills, many are trying Xeriscaping as an alternative to traditional landscaping.

Dr. Doug Welsh, an extension horticulturist, said Xeriscaping is a quality, environmentally safe, low-maintenance landscape.

Welsh said water conservation is the main benefit of Xeriscaping.

"In urban areas, between 40 and 60 percent of water used is for landscaping," Welsh, president of the National Xeriscap Council Inc., said. "(This) surpasses the amount for human consumption."

Welsh said using effective and efficient watering methods can save 10 to 30 percent on the average homeowner's water bill.

"Soil acts like a bank for water," Welsh said. "Plants draw water out of the soil at different rates depending on the type of plant."

For example, he said, a pecan tree can absorb 120 gallons of water a day if available.

"Water-efficient landscapes don't have to be cactus and rock gardens," Welsh said. "They can be cool landscapes full of beautiful, water-efficient plants."

Larry Schueckler, operations manager at Contemporary Landscape Services and Nursery Inc., said the business just started using Xeriscaping in some projects.

"Lots of people are asking (about Xeriscaping) for economics, not wanting high water bills," Schueckler, a landscape architect, said.

He said, however, people are leery to try something different since they don't know how well it

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