

25 ways to save water

in the home...

1. Check for hidden water leaks

Read the house water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, there is a leak.

2. Check your toilets for leaks

Put a little food coloring in your toilet tank. If, without flushing, the color begins to appear in the bowl within 30 minutes, you have a leak that should be repaired immediately. Most replacement parts are inexpensive and easy to install.

3. Don't use the toilet as an ashtray or wastebasket

Every time you flush a cigarette butt, facial tissue or other small bit of trash, five to seven gallons of water is wasted.

4. Put plastic bottles in your toilet tank

To cut down on water waste, put an inch or two of sand or pebbles inside each of two plastic bottles to weigh them down. Fill the bottles with water, screw the lids on, and put them in your toilet tank, safely away from the operating mechanisms. This may save ten or more gallons of water per day. Be sure at least 3 gallons of water remain in the tank so it will flush properly.

For new installations, consider buying "low flush" toilets, which use 1 to 2 gallons per flush instead of the usual 3 to 5 gallons.

5. Insulate your water pipes

It's easy and inexpensive to insulate your water pipes with pre-slit foam pipe insulation. You'll get hot water faster plus avoid wasting water while it heats up.

6. Install water-saving shower heads and low-flow faucet aerators

Inexpensive water-saving shower heads or restrictors are easy for the homeowner to install. Also, long, hot showers can use five to ten gallons every unneeded minute. Limit your showers to the time it takes to soap up, wash down and rinse off.

7. Take shorter showers

One way to cut down on water use is to turn off the shower after soaping up, then turn it back on to rinse. A four-minute shower uses approximately 20 to 40 gallons of water.

8. Turn off the water after you wet your toothbrush

There is no need to keep the water running while brushing your teeth. Just wet your brush and fill a glass for mouth rinsing.

9. Rinse your razor in the sink

Fill the sink with a few inches of warm water. This will rinse your razor just as well as running water, with far less waste of water.

10. Check faucets and pipes for leaks

A small drip from a worn faucet washer can waste 20 gallons of water per day. Larger leaks can waste hundreds of gallons.

11. Use your dishwasher and clothes washer for only full loads

Automatic dishwashers and clothes washers should be fully loaded for optimum water conservation. With clothes washers, avoid the permanent press cycle, which uses an added 20 liters (5 gallons) for the extra rinse. For partial loads, adjust water levels to match the size of the load. Replace old clothes washers. New Energy Star rated washers use 35 - 50% less water and 50% less energy per load. If you're in the market for a new clothes washer, consider buying a water-saving frontload washer.

12. Minimize use of kitchen sink garbage disposal units

In sink 'garburators' require lots of water to operate properly, and also add considerably to the volume of solids in a septic tank which can lead to maintenance problems.

13. When washing dishes by hand, don't leave the water running for rinsing

If you have a double-basin, fill one with soapy water and one with rinse water. If you have a single-basin sink, gather washed dishes in a dish rack and rinse them with a spray device or a panful of hot water.

14. Don't let the faucet run while you clean vegetables

Just rinse them in a stoppered sink or a pan of clean water.

15. Keep a bottle of drinking water in the fridge

Running tap water to cool it off for drinking water is wasteful.

in the yard and garden...

16. Water your lawn only when it needs it

A good way to see if your lawn needs watering is to step on the grass. If it springs back up when you move, it doesn't need water. If it stays flat, the lawn is ready for watering. Letting the grass grow taller (to 3") will promote water retention in the soil.

17. Deep-soak your lawn

When watering the lawn, do it long enough for the moisture to soak down to the roots where it will do the most good. A light sprinkling can evaporate quickly and tends to encourage shallow root systems. Put an empty tuna can on your lawn - when it's full, you've watered about the right amount.

18. Water during the early parts of the day; avoid watering when it's windy

Early morning is generally better than dusk since it helps prevent the growth of fungus. Early watering, and late watering, also reduce water loss to evaporation. Watering early in the day is also the best defense against slugs and other garden pests. Try not to water when it's windy - wind can blow sprinklers off target and speed evaporation.

19. Use efficient watering systems for shrubs, flower beds and lawns

You can greatly reduce the amount of water used for shrubs, beds and lawns with strategic placement of soaker hoses, rain barrel catchment systems and simple drip-irrigation systems. A watering meter can be easily added to your hose, or watering wands with built-in meters can be used to set water usage to required needs.

20. Plant drought-resistant shrubs and plants

Many beautiful shrubs and plants thrive with far less watering than other species. Replace herbaceous perennial borders with native plants.

21. Put a layer of mulch around trees and plants

Mulch will slow evaporation of moisture while discouraging weed growth.

22. Don't water the gutter

Position your sprinklers so water lands on the lawn or garden, not on paved areas. Also, avoid watering on windy days.

23. Don't run the hose while washing your car

Clean the car using a pail of soapy water. Use the hose only for rinsing. Better yet, use a waterless car washing system, which can save up to 100 gallons of water per wash.

24. Use a broom, not a hose, to clean driveways and sidewalks

25. Check for leaks in pipes, hoses, faucets and couplings

Leaks outside the house may not seem as bad since they're not as visible. But they can be just as wasteful as leaks indoors. Check frequently to keep them drip-free. Use hose washers at spigots and hose connections to eliminate leaks.