

Water Saving Tips and Ideas

The cost of providing water will continue to rise. Projections of needs 50 years in the future indicate that considerable more water will be required than is used now. Water conservation is one of the ways that can be employed to help reduce the major cost of future water development.

There are many things we can do as individuals to help reduce the need for future water and to also reduce our monthly water bills right now.

Possible Savings with Water Conservation

For approximately \$10 to \$20, the average homeowner can install two low-flow showerheads, place dams or bottles in the toilet tanks install low-flow aerators on the faucets and repair dripping faucets and leaking toilets. This could save 10,000 to more than 25,000 gallons per year for a family of four, and would pay for itself in less than a year! Even more could be saved if good outdoor water conservation is practiced for the lawn and garden.

In the Kitchen

1. Scrape the dishes clean instead of rinsing them before washing. There is no need to rinse unless they are heavily soiled.
2. Use a pan of water (or place a stopper in the sink) for washing and rinsing pots, pans, dishes and cooking implements, rather than turning on the water faucet each time a rinse is needed.
3. Never run the dishwasher without a full load. This practice will save water, energy, detergent and money.
4. Use the garbage disposal sparingly or start a compost pile.
5. Keep a container of drinking water in the refrigerator. Running water from the tap until it is cool is wasteful. Better still; both water and energy can be saved by keeping cold water in a picnic jug on a kitchen counter to avoid opening the refrigerator door frequently.
6. Use a small pan of cold water when cleaning vegetables, rather than letting the water run over them.
7. Use only a little water in the pot and put a lid on it for cooking most food. Not only does this method save water, but food is more nutritious since vitamins and minerals are not poured down the drain with the extra cooking water.

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8. Always keep water conservation in mind, and think of other ways to save in the kitchen. Small kitchen savings from not making too much coffee and letting ice cubes melt in a sink can add up in a year's time.

In the Bathroom

1. Install a low-flow showerhead that limits the flow from the shower to less than three gallons per minute.
2. Take short showers and install a cutoff valve, or turn the water off while washing and back on again only to rinse.
3. Take a shower instead of taking a bath. Showers with low-flow showerheads often use less water than taking a bath.
4. Reduce the level of the water being used in a bathtub by one or two inches if a shower is not available.
5. Shampoo hair in the shower. Shampooing in the shower takes only a little more water than is used to shampoo hair during a bath and much less than shampooing and bathing separately.
6. When remodeling a bathroom, install a new low-volume flush toilet that uses only 1.6 gallons per flush.
7. Test toilets for leaks. Add a few drops of food coloring or a dye tablet to the water in the tank, but do not flush the toilet. Watch to see if the coloring appears in the bowl within a few minutes. If it does the toilet has a silent leak that needs to be repaired.
8. For older high volume flush toilets use a toilet tank displacement device such as a toilet dam or bag. Also, a plastic bottle can be filled with stones or water, recapped, and placed in the toilet tank. These devices will reduce the volume of water in the tank but will still provide enough for flushing. Bricks are not recommended since they eventually crumble and could damage the working mechanism. Displacement devices are not recommended with new low-volume flush toilets.
9. Never use the toilet to dispose of cleansing tissues, cigarette butts, or other trash. This wastes a great deal of water and also places an unnecessary load on the sewage treatment plant or septic tank.
10. Do not use hot water when cold will do. Water and energy can be saved by washing hands with soap and cold water. Hot water should be added only when hands are especially dirty.

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11. When brushing teeth, turn the water off until it is time to rinse.
12. Do not let the water run when washing hands. Water should be turned off when washing and scrubbing and be turned on again to rinse. A cutoff valve may be installed on the faucet.
13. When shaving, fill the lavatory basin with hot water. Instead of letting the water run continuously.
14. Install faucet aerators to reduce water consumption.

In the Laundry

1. Wash only a full load when using an automatic washing machine (32 to 59 gallons are used per load).
2. Whenever possible, use the lowest water-level setting on the washing machine for light or partial loads.
3. Use cold water as often as possible to save energy and to conserve the hot water for uses that cold water cannot serve. (This is also better for clothing made of today's synthetic fabrics).

Appliance and Plumbing

1. Check water requirements of various models and brands when considering purchasing any new appliances. Some use less water than others.
2. Check all waterline connections and faucets for leaks. A slow drip can waste as much as 170 gallons of water **EACH DAY**, or 5000 gallons per month.
3. Learn to repair faucets so that drips can be corrected promptly. It is easy to do, costs very little, and can mean a substantial savings in plumbing and water bills.
4. Check for hidden water leakage such as a leak between the water meter and the house. To check, turn off all indoor and outdoor faucets and water using appliances. The water meter should be read at 10 to 20 minute intervals. If it continues to run or turn, a leak probably exists and needs to be located.
5. Insulate all hot water pipes to reduce the delays and wasted water experienced while waiting for the water to run hot.
6. Be sure the water heater thermostat is not set too high. Extremely hot setting wastes water and energy because the water often has to be cooled with cold water before it can be used.

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For Outdoor Use

1. Water only when needed. Look at the grass, feel the soil, or use a soil moisture meter to determine when to water.
2. Do not over-water. Soil can hold only so much moisture and the rest runs off. A timer will help. A kitchen timer or an alarm clock can be used to remind you when to stop watering. Apply only enough water to fill the plants root zone. Excess water beyond that is wasted. One and a half inches of water applied once a week in the summer will keep most Texas grasses alive and healthy.
3. Water lawns early in the morning during the hotter summer months. During the hot part of the day much of the water used on the lawn can evaporate between the sprinkler and the grass.
4. To avoid excessive evaporation, use a sprinkler that produces large drops of water, rather than a fine mist. Sprinklers that send droplets out on a low angle also help control evaporation. Adjust sprinkler heads as necessary, to avoid waste, runoff and ensure proper coverage.
5. Set automatic sprinkler systems to provide thorough, but infrequent watering. Pressure-regulating devices should be set to design specifications. Rain shut-off devices can prevent watering in the rain.
6. Use drip irrigation systems for bedding plants, trees, or shrubs. Turn soaker hoses upside-down so the holes are on the bottom. This will help avoid evaporation.
7. Water slowly for better absorption, and never water on windy days.
8. Forget about watering the streets or walks or driveways. They will never grow a thing.
9. Condition the soil with mulch or compost before planting grass or flowerbeds so that water will soak in rather than run off. A thick layer of compost or mulch on top of the soil helps keep the plants cool and reduces the water needs.
10. Fertilize lawns at least twice a year for root stimulation, but do not over-fertilize. Grass with a good root system makes better use of less water and is more drought tolerant.
11. Do not scalp lawns when mowing during hot weather. Taller grass holds moisture better. Grass should be cut fairly often, so that only $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch is trimmed off. A better looking lawn will result.

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12. Use a watering can or hand water with a hose in small areas of the lawn that need more frequent watering (those near walks or driveways or in especially hot sunny spots).
13. Use water-wise plants. Learn what types of grass, shrubbery, and plants do best in the area and in which parts of the lawn, and then plant accordingly. Chose plants that have low water requirements, are drought-tolerant, and are adapted to the area of the state where they are to be planted.
14. Consider decorating some areas of the lawn with wood chips, rocks, gravel, or other materials now available that require no water.
15. Do not sweep walks and driveways with the hose. Use a broom or rake instead.
16. When washing the car, use a bucket of soapy water and turn on the hose only for rinsing. Use a quick shut off nozzle to reduce wasted water.
17. Use a moisture meter to determine when house plants need water. More plants die from over-watering than from being on the dry side.