

WHY CONSERVE WATER? WHY NOT?

There are lots of good reasons to learn to use our water resources more efficiently. In Texas, our conventional fresh-water supplies are already 75 to 80 percent developed, so it is just common sense that we put water conservation and reuse measures into effect – not only to preserve and extend limited water supplies, but to save some real money, too.

Water customers have a lot to gain by using water wisely. Consider, for example, that if everyone cut back just 10 to 15 percent in personal water use, we could save billions of dollars over the next 50 years. The effort to conserve water requires us to change some wasteful habits, and it must begin now. Some steps are simple: don't leave the water running in the sink, for example, while you put toothpaste on your toothbrush and scrub your teeth. Turn it on for rinsing only. Others, like landscaping modifications, can take more time, thought and resources to accomplish. But, everyone can participate by using water wiser in some way.

Here are some ways to save both water and money at home:

- For an investment of \$10 to \$20, homeowners can install low-flow shower heads, place dams or bottles in the toilet tank, install low-flow aerators on the faucets, and repair dripping faucets and leaking toilets. This could save the average household 10,000 to 25,000 gallons each year for a family of four, and would pay for itself in less than a year! Even more savings can be realized if good outdoor water conservation is practiced for the lawn and garden.
- When building a new home or remodeling a bathroom, install a new low-volume flush toilet that uses only 1.6 gallons per flush.
- Test toilets for leaks. Add a few drops of food coloring to the water in the toilet 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.
- Use some type of toilet tank displacement device to reduce the volume of water in the tank, but still provide enough for flushing. (Bricks are NOT recommended because they eventually crumble and could damage the working mechanisms.) Displacement devices are not recommended with new low-volume flush toilets.
- Do not use hot water when cold water will do. Period.

In the kitchen...

- Scrape the dishes clean instead of rinsing them before placing them in the dishwasher.
- Fill a pan of water — or put 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.
- Never run the dishwasher without a full load. This will save water, energy, detergent and money.
Keep a container of drinking water in the refrigerator. Running water from the tap until it is cool enough to drink is wasteful.
- Use a small pan of cold water when cleaning vegetables rather than letting the water run over them.

- Use less water for cooking. Not only does it save water, but also food is more nutritious when the vitamins and minerals are not “boiled” out of them and poured down the sink with the extra water.
- Always keep water conservation in mind. Avoid doing wasteful things like making a huge pot of coffee if you’re only going to drink one or two cups, or even throwing away a glass full of ice after it cooled a few swallows of water. These things may not seem like much, but they add up over time.

In the Laundry...

- Did you know that 32 to 59 gallons of water are required for each washing machine load?
- Wash only full loads of clothes when using your washing machine.
- Use the lowest possible water level setting on the washing machine.
- Use cold water whenever possible. This saves energy, too, and conserves the hot water for other uses. This is also better for most of today’s fabrics.

Appliances and Plumbing...

- When purchasing new appliances, check the water requirements of various models and brands. Some use less water than others.
- Check water line connections and faucets for leaks. A slow drip can waste as much as 170 gallons of water EACH DAY, or 5,000 gallons a month. This will increase your water bill.
- Repair leaky faucets promptly. It is easy to do, it costs very little and can make a substantial savings in your water bills.
- Make sure that the line from the water meter to your house is free of leaks. 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.
- Insulate all hot water pipes to reduce the delays (and wasted water) experienced while waiting for the water to heat up.
- Set the thermostat on the hot water heater at a reasonable level. Extremely hot settings waste water (because it takes some extra cold water to make it usable) and energy and can even cause minor burns.

Outdoor Use...

- Water only when needed and do not over-water. Soil can absorb only so much moisture, and the rest will simply run off. A timer can help. In the summer months, one and a half inches of water applied once a week will keep most Texas grasses alive and healthy.
- The best time to water lawns is in the morning during the hot summer months. Otherwise, much of the water can simply evaporate between the sprinkler and the lawn.
- Use a sprinkler that throws large drops of water — rather than a fine mist — to avoid evaporation. Sprinklers that send the water out on a low angle also help control evaporation.
Set automatic sprinkler systems to provide thorough, but infrequent, watering. Rain shut-off devices can prevent watering in the rain.

- Use drip irrigation systems for bedded plants, trees or shrubs, or turn soaker hoses upside-down so the holes are on the bottom. This will help avoid evaporation.
- Don't water the streets, driveways or sidewalks...they will never grow a thing!
- Condition the soil with mulch or compost before planting grass or flower beds so the water will sink in rather than run off.
- Do not "scalp" lawns when mowing during hot weather. Taller grass holds moisture better.
- Use a watering can or hand water with a hose in small areas of the lawn that need extra attention, and for small flower beds along walks and driveways. Hanging baskets can sometimes be watered more efficiently by taking them down and placing them in the path of a sprinkler instead of running water through the hose.
- Don't "sweep" walks and decks with water. Use a broom or rake instead.
- Consider using water-wise plants. Learn what types of grass, shrubbery, and bedding plants do best in our community. Chose plants that have low water needs, are drought-tolerant, and are adapted to the area in which they will be planted.

Water Conservation is making the most efficient use of our state's precious water resources.

MAKE IT YOUR IDEA!