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# What You Can Do To Conserve Water

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College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Sciences

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## **What You Can Do To Conserve Water**

Sue Ballard de Ruiz and Margaret Machara

In 1950, the average American used 88 gallons of water per day. Now, we each use about 154 gallons per day. The U.S. government projects that at least 36 states will face continuous water shortages within four years because of a combination of rising temperatures, drought, population growth, urban sprawl, waste and excess. These water shortages are already impacting food and gas prices, relationships between states, and electricity production. The following recommendations will assist you in reducing your water consumption.

### **• Inside your home:**

- Use washers only when you have a full load. Buy Energy Star when replacing washers: Energy Star dishwashers use only 4 gallons per load; front loading washers use about 1/3 of the water that a typical top loader uses (20 gallons compared to 60 gallons depending on models).
- When washing dishes by hand don't let the water run. Fill the sink, or better yet, use a dish pan and use the dirty water to water plants. They love it!
- If you use a dehumidifier, don't let the water go down the drain. Use the fill bucket on the humidifier and use the water for plants, flushing toilets, or ironing. Water from dehumidifiers is mineral free and doesn't clog irons.
- Don't let water run while brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Don't use the toilet as a wastebasket. Older toilets use about 6 gallons of water per flush!
- Take shorter showers and save water as well as energy. A ten minute shower uses approximately 70 gallons of water and ten pounds of coal for the electricity to heat water. A low-flow shower head uses about 25 gallons for a ten minute shower.
- Try using a shower bucket. Instead of letting the water pour down the drain, simply stick a bucket under the faucet while you wait for your shower water to heat up. You can use the water you saved for watering your plants.
- Compost scraps rather than use the garbage disposal. Save water, reduce landfill waste, reduce septic tank maintenance, and create great soil.
- Reuse your pasta water. Instead of dumping that water down the drain, try draining your pasta water into a large pot. Once the water cools to room temperature you can use it to water your plants.



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- **Simple solutions available at your hardware store; no plumber needed:**
  - Replace leaky flappers on toilets: a leaky toilet can use 200 gallons or more per day. You can test your flapper by putting 10 drops of food coloring in the tank of your toilet. Don't flush for 15 minutes. If the colored water shows up in the bowl, the tank is leaking.
  - Replace washers on leaky faucets: a dripping faucet can waste 20 or more gallons per day
  - Use low flow shower heads and aerators.
  - Install low flow toilets that save up to 5 gallons per flush, or displace water in the tank with a brick.
  - Energy use = Water use. For every gallon of drinking water a household uses, three gallons of water is used to generate electricity. Using less energy means using less water.
  
- **Outside your home:**
  - Rain barrels provide water for plants and gardens, as well as reduce storm water runoff. You can collect rainwater from rooftops in mosquito-proof containers.
  - Clean patios and driveways using a broom, not a hose.
  - Wash the dog in the yard, not in the tub. Just be sure the soap is safe for the grass and plants.
  - If you must wash your car, use a carwash. They use less water and keep toxins from going into waterways and the soil.
  
- **Recommended lawn care:**
  - Trees, shrubs, and groundcover require less water to maintain than grass. Plant less grass. Don't mow it until it is about 3" tall.
  - Use mulch, composted leaves and grass clippings around plants to hold in moisture, reduce weeds and provide nutrients.
  - Landscape with plants bred to survive on less rainfall.
  - Water early morning or evening as needed; use a soaker hose or a manual sprayer.
  - Position the sprinkler head so water lands on the lawn and shrubs, not on the pavement.
  - Do not use a misting sprinkler. Most of the water will evaporate before it gets to your lawn and shrubs.
  - Don't forget about your running sprinkler. If you are going to leave your sprinkler unattended while you are watering your lawn, be sure to set a timer as a reminder to turn the water off.

### **Remember!!**

**These water conservation tips are not restricted to when there is a drought. When you are conserving water you are also lowering your water bill, so practice water conservation all year round to save you and your family money.**



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