

How you can help

Saving Water Indoors

1. Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it — such as watering a plant or garden, or for cleaning.
2. Verify that your home is leak free. Many homes have hidden water leaks. Read your 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.
3. Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. If your faucet is dripping at a rate of one drop per second, you can expect to waste 2,700 gallons per year. This adds to the cost of water and sewer utilities, or can strain your septic system.
4. Retrofit all household faucets by installing aerators with flow restrictors.
5. Check for toilet tank leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the toilet bowl within 30 minutes. Check the toilet for worn out, corroded or bent parts. Most replacement parts are inexpensive, readily available and easily installed. (Flush as soon as test is done, since food coloring may stain tank.)
6. If the toilet handle frequently sticks in the flush position, letting water run constantly, replace or adjust it.
7. Install a toilet dam or displacement device, such as a bag or bottle, to cut down on the amount of water needed for each flush. Be sure installation does not interfere with the operating parts. When purchasing new or replacement toilets, consider low-volume units that use less than half the water of older models. In many areas, low-volume units are required by law.
8. Take shorter showers. Replace your showerhead with an ultra-low-flow version. Some units are available that allow you to cut off the flow without adjusting the water temperature knobs.
9. Place a bucket in the shower to catch excess water and use this to water plants. The same technique can be used when washing dishes or vegetables in the sink.
10. In the shower, turn water on to get wet; turn off to lather up; then turn back on to rinse off. Repeat when washing your hair.
11. Operate automatic dishwashers and clothes washers only when they are fully loaded. Set the water level for the size of load you are using.
12. When washing dishes by hand, fill one sink or basin with soapy water. Quickly rinse under a slow moving stream from the faucet.
13. Store drinking water in the refrigerator. Don't let the tap run while you are waiting for cool water to flow.
14. Do not use running water to thaw meat or other frozen foods. Defrost food overnight in the refrigerator or use the defrost setting on your microwave.
15. Kitchen sink disposals require lots of water to operate properly. Instead of using a garbage disposal, start a compost pile as an alternate method of disposing of food waste. Garbage disposals also can add 50 percent to the volume of solids in a septic tank, which can lead to malfunctions and maintenance problems.
16. Consider installing an instant water heater on your kitchen sink so you don't have to let the water run while it heats. This will reduce water heating costs for your household.
17. Insulate your water pipes. You'll get hot water faster and avoid wasting water while it heats.
18. Never install a water-to-air heat pump or air-conditioning system. Newer air-to-air models are just as efficient and do not waste water.
19. Don't let water run while shaving or washing your face. Brush your teeth first while waiting for water to get hot, then wash or shave after filling the basin.

20. Install water softening systems only when necessary. Save water and salt by running the minimum amount of regenerations necessary to maintain water softness. Turn softeners off while on vacation.
21. If you have a well at home, check your pump periodically. Listen to hear if the pump kicks on and off while water is not being used. If it does, you have a leak.
22. Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Dispose of tissues, insects and other similar waste in the trash rather than the toilet.

Saving Water Out Doors

1. Don't over-water your lawn. As a general rule, lawns only need watering every 5 to 7 days in the summer and every 10 to 14 days in the winter. A hearty rain eliminates the need for watering for up to two weeks. Buy a rain gauge and use it to determine how much rain your yard has received. Most of the year lawns only need 1 inch of water per week.
2. Plant it smart. Xeriscape™ landscaping is a great way to design, install and maintain both your plants and irrigation system. More importantly, it will save time, money and water.
3. Water lawns during the early morning hours when temperatures and wind speed are the lowest. This reduces losses from evaporation.
4. Don't allow sprinklers to water your street, driveway or sidewalk. Position them so water lands on the lawn and shrubs — not the paved areas.
5. Install irrigation devices that are the most water efficient for each use. Micro and drip irrigation and soaker hoses are examples of water efficient irrigation methods.
6. Check sprinkler systems and timing devices regularly to be sure they operate properly. Florida law now requires that "anyone who purchases and installs an automatic lawn sprinkler system MUST install a rain sensor device or switch which will override the irrigation cycle of the system when adequate rainfall has occurred." To retrofit your existing system, contact an irrigation professional for more information.
7. Raise the lawn mower blade to at least 3 inches, or to its highest level. A higher cut encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system and holds soil moisture better than a closely clipped lawn.
8. Avoid over fertilizing your lawn. Fertilizer applications increase the need for water. Apply fertilizers that contain slow-release, water-insoluble forms of nitrogen.
9. Use mulch to retain moisture in the soil. Mulch also helps control weeds that compete with landscape plants for water.
10. Plant native and/or drought-tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs and trees. Once established, they do not need water as frequently and usually will survive a dry period without watering. Group plants together based on similar water needs.
11. Do not hose down your driveway or sidewalk. Use a broom to clean leaves and other debris from these areas.
12. Use a shut-off nozzle on your hose which can be adjusted down to a fine spray so that water flows only as needed. When finished, turn it off at the faucet instead of at the nozzle to avoid leaks. Check hose connectors to make sure plastic or rubber washers are in place. Washers prevent leaks.
13. Do not leave sprinklers or hoses unattended. A garden hose can pour out 600 gallons or more in only a few hours. Use a kitchen timer to remind yourself to turn sprinklers off.
14. Avoid purchasing recreational water toys that require a constant stream of water.
15. Consider using a commercial car wash that recycles water. If you wash your own car, park on the grass and use a hose with an automatic shut-off nozzle.
16. Avoid the installation of ornamental water features (such as fountains) unless the water is recycled.
17. If you have a swimming pool, consider a new water-saving pool filter. A single back flushing

with a traditional filter uses 180 to 250 gallons of water.

General Water-Saving Tips

1. Get involved in water management issues. Voice your questions and concerns at public meetings conducted by your local government or water management district.
2. Be aware of and follow all water conservation and water shortage rules in effect in your community. Don't assume –even if you get your water from a private well —that you do not need to observe good water-use rules. Every drop counts.
3. Encourage your employer to promote water conservation in the workplace. Suggest that water conservation be put in employee orientation and training programs.
4. Patronize businesses that practice and promote water conservation, such as restaurants that only serve water upon request.
5. Report all significant water losses (broken pipes, open hydrants, errant sprinklers, abandoned free-flowing wells, etc.) to the property owner, local authorities or your water management district.
6. Encourage your school system and local government to help develop and promote a water conservation ethic among children and adults.
7. Support projects that will lead to an increased use of reclaimed wastewater for irrigation and other uses.
8. Support efforts and programs that create a concern for water conservation among tourists and visitors to our state. Make sure your visitors understand the need for, and benefits of, water conservation.
9. Encourage your friends and neighbors to be part of a water-conscious community. Promote water conservation in community newsletters, on bulletin boards and by example. Encourage your friends, neighbors and coworkers to “do their part.”
10. Conserve water because it is the right thing to do. Don't waste water just because someone else is footing the bill, such as when you are staying at a hotel.
11. Try to do one thing each day that will result in saving water. Don't worry if the savings are minimal. Every drop counts. You can make a difference.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District

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