

Embrace conservation and watch your water bill drop

by Cathy Lubenski

Population growth means people are using more and more water every day. In most parts of the country, voluntary conservation is the water-wise way to live.

WATER CONSERVATION - Saving water in small ways really adds up by the end of the day. CNS Photo. Across the country, water authorities are challenging residents to cut their usage of this precious and finite resource. Saving water in small ways really adds up by the end of the day.

Here are some ways you can put a stopper in your water-wasteful ways:

INDOORS:

- Don't let the water run while you're brushing your teeth, shaving or washing your face. It can waste up to 4 gallons a minute.
- Take a 1-gallon bucket into the shower with you. If it fills in less than 20 seconds, replace your shower head with a water-efficient, ultra-low-flow version. It can save up to 500 gallons of water a week.
- Instead of letting water run down the drain, save it and use it for watering a plant or a garden or cleaning.
- Take shorter showers. If you keep your shower time to under five minutes, you'll save 1,000 gallons a month.

- Don't use the toilet as a wastebasket. Throw tissues and other debris into a trash can to avoid flushing unnecessarily.

- Insulate hot water pipes so you don't have to run as much to get hot water to the faucet.

- Don't thaw meat or other frozen foods under running water. Defrost food overnight in the refrigerator or by using the defrost setting on your microwave.

- To check for toilet leaks, put food coloring in the tank. Color will appear in the bowl in 30 seconds if there's a leak. Check for worn out, corroded, or bent parts and replace. You can save up to 600 gallons a month.

- Install an instant water heater on your kitchen sink. This cuts down on the time the water runs before it gets hot (it also reduces heating costs).

- Sink disposals require a lot of water to work. Start a compost pile with food debris instead (avoid meats, fats and grease).

- Soak dirty pots and pans instead of letting the water run while you scrape them clean.

- Use the proper size pans for cooking. Large pans need more cooking water than might be necessary.

OUTDOORS:

- Water gardens and lawns early in the morning to cut down on evaporation.
- Use a broom instead of water to clean driveways and sidewalks.
- Use sprinklers that throw big drops of water close to the ground. Smaller drops of water and mist can evaporate before they hit the ground.
- Bathe your pets outside in an area that needs watering.
- Aerate your lawn by punching holes about 6 inches apart in the grass so water will reach the roots rather than run off the surface.
- Wash your car on the lawn instead of the driveway, and use a hose that allows you to turn the water off at the nozzle. That can save more than 100 gallons.
- Only water the lawn when needed. Walk across the lawn, if you leave footprints, it's time to water.

- Take your car to a professional car wash, where the water is recycled.
- Check sprinklers to make sure only the lawn is being watered, not the sidewalk, house or street.
- Don't water the garden or the lawn when it's windy.
- Weed frequently. Weeds compete with other plants for nutrients, light and water.
- When cleaning the fish tank, use the water on your plants. It's rich in nitrogen and phosphorus, the components in fertilizers.
- Plant drought-tolerant native plants instead of grass, which requires a lot of water to maintain.
- When watering plants on a slope, use a soaker system, which cuts down runoff.
- Choose a fountain or water feature that doesn't spray water into the air. Trickling or cascading fountains lose less water to evaporation.

INDOORS AND OUT:

- Do one thing every day that will save water. Every drop counts.

For more tips, visit www.wateruseitwisely.com and www.bewaterwise.com.

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