

Water conservation tips

Because the majority of water used at home is used outdoors, even small steps to save water can yield big savings. Little things like fixing a broken sprinkler or making sure that you are running your sprinklers in the cool of the mornings or evenings can save lots of water. You can conserve even more by reducing the amount of lawn you have, installing a drip irrigation system or adding a weather-based “smart” controller. For ideas to create beautiful drought-tolerant landscaping drop by to your local nursery.

Remember, every drop of water is important. Use water wisely. The drought is on – turn your water off.

Outdoor water use

Most Californians think that they use more water indoors than outdoors. Typically, the opposite is true. In some areas, 50 percent or more of the water we use daily goes on lawns and outdoor landscaping. There are lots of ways to save water at home, but reducing the water you use outdoors can make the biggest difference of all. Here are a few easy ways to change the way you use water outside your home.

Know the basics

- During Stage 3 mandatory water conservation:
 - The Calaveras County Water District is asking customers to reduce water use by 35 percent as compared to last year.
 - Customers may only water before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m. when temperatures are cooler. Save: 25 gallons/each time you water.
 - Customers who have odd-numbered addresses may water on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Those with even-numbered addresses, may water Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. There is no outdoor watering on Sundays.
 - Customers may not fill swimming pools.
- Check your sprinkler system frequently and adjust sprinklers so only your lawn is watered and not the house, sidewalk or street. Save: up to 15 gallons each time you water
- Choose a water-efficient irrigation system such as drip irrigation for your trees, shrubs, and flowers. Save: 15 gallons each time you water.
- Water deeply but less frequently to create healthier and stronger landscapes.
- Put a layer of mulch around trees and plants to reduce evaporation and keep the soil cool. Organic mulch also improves the soil and prevents weeds. Save: 20 to 30 gallons each time you water 1,000 square feet.

- Plant drought-resistant trees and plants. Save: 30 to 60 gallons each time you water 1,000 square feet.

Don't overwater

One easy way to cut down how much water you use outdoors is to learn how much water your landscaping actually needs in order to thrive. Overwatering is one of the most common mistakes people make. To understand how much water your landscaping really needs, learn more about evapotranspiration visit <http://www.cimis.water.ca.gov/Resources.aspx>.

Also check with the Calaveras Master Gardeners for a free consultation. They are trained experts on drought-resistant plants and how to use water wisely. Contact them at 754-2880 or visit <http://ucanr.edu/sites/CalaverasCountyMasterGardeners/>

Get smart

If you really want to be a sophisticated water user, invest in a weather-based irrigation controller – or a smart controller. These devices will automatically adjust the watering time and frequency based on soil moisture, rain, wind, and evaporation and transpiration rates. For more information on sprinklers, visit <http://www.saveourh2o.org/sprinklers101>.

Outdoor cleanup

Water is often a go-to tool for outdoor clean-up jobs.

- Use a broom to clean driveways, sidewalks and patios. Save: 8 to 18 gallons per minute.
- Wash cars and boats with a bucket, sponge and hose with self-closing nozzle. Save: 8 to 18 gallons per minute.
- Invest in a water broom. If you have to use water to clean up outside, a water broom will attach to your hose but uses a combination of air and water pressure to aid cleaning. Water brooms can use as little as 2.8 gallons per minute to remove dirt, food spills, leaves and litter from concrete and asphalt while a standard hose typically uses 5 to 20 gpm.

Indoor water use

Water is essential to each of us every day. But it's a limited resource, so we all need to rethink the way we use water on a daily basis. By following these water-saving tips inside your home, you can help save water every day.

Laundry room

- Use the washing machine for full loads only to save water and energy.
- Install a water-efficient clothes washer and save up to 16 gallons per load.
- Washing dark clothes in cold water saves water and energy. It also helps your clothes retain their color.

Kitchen

- Run the dishwasher only when full to save water and energy.
- Install a water-and energy-efficient dishwasher. Save: 3 to 8 gallons per load.
- Install aerators on the kitchen faucet to reduce flows to less than 1 gallon per minute.
- When washing dishes by hand, don't let the water run. Fill one basin with wash water and the other with rinse water.
- Dishwashers typically use less water than washing dishes by hand.
- If your dishwasher is new, cut back on rinsing. Newer models clean more thoroughly than older ones.
- Soak pots and pans instead of letting the water run while you scrape them clean.
- Use the garbage disposal sparingly. Instead, compost vegetable food waste and save gallons every time.
- Wash your fruits and vegetables in a pan of water instead of running water from the tap.
- Don't use running water to thaw food. Defrost food in the refrigerator.
- Keep a pitcher of drinking water in the refrigerator instead of running the tap.
- Cook food in as little water as possible. This also helps it retain more nutrients.
- Select the proper pan size for cooking. Large pans may require more cooking water than necessary.
- If you accidentally drop ice cubes, don't throw them in the sink. Drop them in a house plant instead.
- Collect the water you use while rinsing fruit and vegetables. Use it to water house plants.

Bathroom

- Install low-flow shower heads. Save: 2.5 gallons.
- Take five-minute showers instead of 10-minute showers. Save: 12.5 gallons with a low-flow showerhead, 25 gallons with a standard 5 gallon-per-minute showerhead.
- Fill the bathtub halfway or less. Save: 12 gallons.
- When running a bath, plug the bathtub before turning on the water. Adjust the temperature as the tub fills.
- Install aerators on bathroom faucets. Save: 1.2 gallons per person per day
- Turn water off when brushing teeth or shaving. Save about 10 gallons per day
- Install a high-efficiency toilet. Save: 19 gallons per person per day. Learn more about toilets here: <http://saveourh2o.org/content/getting-personal-what-kind-toilet-do-you-have>
- Take advantage of CCWD's toilet rebate program. Learn more here: http://ccwd.org/customerservice/custserv_conserv.html
- Don't use the toilet as a wastebasket.
- Be sure to test your toilet for leaks at least once a year.
- Put food coloring in your toilet tank. If it seeps into the bowl without flushing, there's a leak. Fix it and start saving gallons.

- Consider buying a dual-flush toilet. It has two flush options: a half-flush for liquid waste and a full-flush for solid waste.
- Plug the sink instead of running the water to rinse your razor and save up to 300 gallons a month.
- Turn off the water while washing your hair and save up to 150 gallons a month.
- When washing your hands, turn the water off while you lather.
- Take a (short) shower instead of a bath. A bathtub can use up to 70 gallons of water.