

Simple Ways to Save H2O - Little Effort with Great Rewards

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CAN BE ADJUSTED TO RUN MORE EFFICIENTLY.

BY KIMBERLY HORG-WEBB

There are numerous ways people can conserve water that take little effort and have great rewards. Conserving water is always important but it is especially crucial right now in our valley because of the drought. The governor declared a state of emergency in the Central Valley Region, stating that some valley cities, including Modesto, experienced their driest spring on record in 2008. And 2009 is not shaping up to be much better.

Simple Changes Add Up

People can save water inside and outside the home by making some simple changes.

Every room in the house that has running water can be adjusted to run more efficiently. Whether purchasing a low-volume showerhead with quick shut off buttons (so water flow can be stopped while lathering up) or buying a faucet aerator, which breaks flowing water into fine drops, installing inexpensive devices can save big in the long run. Aerators are easy to install and can reduce water use as much as 60% while still producing a strong flow.

People can also purchase a toilet dam or a displacement bag from any hardware store to reduce the volume in each flush by one to two gallons. Replacing an old toilet with a new ultra-low volume toilet can save almost three and a half gallons with each flush.

Brushing your teeth? Turn off the water while brushing. That simple act can save thousands of gallons a year. Just how much? Consider a drippy faucet - one drop of water per second wastes 2,700 gallons of water per year.

Think Smart Usage

For dish washing, try to wipe off the greasy pans a paper towel to use less water (and recycle the paper in the green bin). Instead of running the water as you wash, fill the sink or wash bin with sudsy water, and wash dishes in there.

When washing vegetables, use a pan of water and a vegetable brush to wash all the vegetables at once for a meal. Fill kettles only to the depth required instead of overfilling them. Instead of letting the water run to get a cold drink, keep a cool pitcher of water in the refrigerator.

Run the washer only if there is a full load or if there is a low volume setting. Use the suds saver setting on the washer to reuse wash water. If buying a new washing machine, shop for water-saving features, such as water level controls.

Beyond the Home

Outside the home, people can conserve water by replacing the hose-and-bucket wash with a "waterless" car wash product or by visiting a commercial car wash that re-circulates water. The average home carwash uses between 80-150 gallons of

water. Note that in most communities, if you do wash your car, you need to use a positive shut off valve, so the water does not run continuously.

Gray water can be collected from showers, tubs, dishwashers, sinks and clothes washers by installing a water collection system so it can be reused to water plants. Note that some municipalities consider gray water to be wastewater so check with local ordinances and health departments.

That green lawn is a water guzzler. One sure-proof way of water conservation is to use native plants that need little water. Using a watering can and pouring water under each plant can save a lot of water, as can the use of targeted drip irrigation. People may even want to check out a gardening supply store to set up a slow-release system, either a drip-line or a slow release reservoir to save time and water. And follow your community's watering restrictions - you may be fined if you don't.

Another way to help reduce landscaping water use is to water your plants earlier or later in the day. This reduces evaporation because the the sun is lower and temperatures are cooler.

Don't take water for granted. Think thrice when using water, and encourage your family members to do the same. We all need to do our part. *S_M*