



Conserving Water in the Home

It's a blessing when it falls from the sky to replenish the fields and lakes and streams.

It's wasted when it overflows from sprinkler systems into the street. It's fun to play in and delicious when cold.

It's a necessity for personal health, growing crops, maintaining life in all its forms.

It's water.

And it's available only in finite supply.

A quote from Janie Harris an Extension Specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, "We'll never have more water than we have now," And even though the water supply isn't getting any larger, our population and the rate of water use is.

Because of that, "our water supply is actually decreasing. That's where conservation comes in. We must reduce the amount of water usage per capita in order to increase the supply. Some communities have come close to running out of water in recent years.

In some areas, new housing developments are required to have methods of reducing water demand, such as catching rainwater or using gray water.

Federal laws in effect since 1992 require water-conserving plumbing equipment, such as water-conserving toilets and shower heads. Today we have even more efficient water saving plumbing fixtures and faucets. Look for the Water Sense label to help you identify the super water savers, she added. Many Energy Star appliances have improved technology that allows them to use up to 50% less water.

But what about older houses? What can residents do to conserve water when their homes have older plumbing?

First, the experts said, fix leaks. That's number one step in to saving water. Even small leaks waste a large amount of water.

Fixing leaks doesn't usually cost all that much. Usually it involves replacing a washer.

The other thing that we can all do to save water is to change some of our water use behaviors. Many of our everyday tasks can be done with less water. Learn to turn the water off while brushing teeth or shaving.

When you're washing the dishes, don't leave the faucet running. When you're washing the car, wash it over the grass, and turn the water off while you soap and scrub the car. Or go to a car wash that recycles water.

Water conservation inside the home needs to start in the bathroom since most of the home's water use is there.

Homes built before 1992 may not have low-flush toilets. To cut back on wasted water in the bathroom, try filling plastic bottles with water and placing them in the toilet's tank to displace the amount of water used per flush.

You can use anything to displace the water as long as it doesn't deteriorate in the water or interfere with the flushing mechanism. You should use bricks to displace water in toilet tanks because the wet bricks tend to disintegrate and produce fine granules that keep the flapper valve from working correctly. The better choice is to replace the toilet with a Water Sense toilet fixture.

Be more careful with water when showering. Plumbing systems that take one to three minutes to deliver hot water to the shower are wasting about a gallon a minute. Even with new water-conserving shower heads. Catch that water and use it to water plants or flush toilets. The bottom line is to make every drop count.

For more information on conserving water at home, visit Extension's Family and Consumer Sciences Web site at <http://fcs.tamu.edu/> and click on the link to Housing and Environment, then on the link to water management.