

BETTER WATER PRACTICES: WATER CONSERVATION TIPS



INTRODUCTION

Water is a valuable resource that sustains everyday life. Take a moment to think about how frequently you use water in your daily routine. Whether you are washing clothes or watering your garden, challenge yourself to find ways to reduce your monthly water consumption. The following ideas can be used to set sustainability goals for water conservation.

HOUSEHOLD WATER USAGE



Check all fixtures for leaks. Toilets, faucets and sprinkler systems are the most common locations for issues. If a single faucet drips once every second, you could lose more than 1,000 gallons of water per year. Check out the U.S. Geological Survey [Drip Calculator](#) to see how much water you can save by fixing leaks.



Convert water fixtures, such as showerheads and sink faucets, to WaterSense products to reduce the flow and conserve water. A WaterSense showerhead reduces the flow from the standard 2.5 gallons per minute (gpm) to 2 gpm. If you take a 10-minute shower every day, that will save 1,825 gallons per year.



Use WaterSense toilets to reduce the volume used per flush. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates these products can save 13,000 gallons per year in the average family household.



Placing a filled water bottle in the tank of your toilet can also reduce the water used per flush, but care must be taken to place it so that it does not interfere with the flushing mechanism. A 20-ounce filled bottle is sufficient for small tanks, while a 2-liter bottle works best for larger tanks.

Turn off the sink when you are brushing your teeth, shaving or drying dishes. For reference, the average faucet has a flow rate of 1 gpm. If you leave the water running for the two minutes that dentists recommend brushing your teeth, twice a day, that's 1,460 gallons per year. A motion-activated sink can also help reduce running water times and keep daily activities simple.



Try a "Power Shower Challenge." Pick two days during the week to break your routine and take a power shower. Instead of spending 10 minutes, set a timer and shower in five minutes to reduce your water usage by half. Doing this twice a week can save 1,300 gallons a year.



Baths are great and relaxing but remember that an average bath uses 50 gallons of water, while a 10-minute shower only uses 25 gallons.

In the kitchen, collect any excess water while rinsing fruits and vegetables to reuse for plants or outdoor gardens. Any opportunity to reuse water around your house will lead to water savings.



The average dishwasher uses about 6 gallons per load. Make sure to only run the dishwasher for full loads and consider running on a more economical mode, sometimes called ECO mode, or switching to an EnergyStar appliance which uses 4 or fewer gallons per cycle.



Plan ahead to thaw meat in the refrigerator the night before you need it. Filling the sink with hot water can use 2 gallons or more. If you plan to thaw meat with warm water, keep it in a pot to use for watering plants in your garden.



The average laundry washing machine uses 19 gallons of water per cycle. If you do multiple loads per week, even reducing it by one load can save 988 gallons per year. Make sure to only run the washing machine when it's full to minimize water usage. Switching your older model washer to an eco-friendly version can reduce your water usage by up to 10 gallons per load.

OUTSIDE WATER USAGE

Consider building an affordable setup for harvesting rainwater to offset water usage. Rainwater harvesting can produce nonpotable water for plant and garden use from natural resources. Check out [LSU AgCenter Rainwater Harvesting for Small Nurseries and Home Gardens](#) for ideas.

Use modern irrigation methods, such as timers or controllers for sprinklers, to help regulate the water usage for your garden areas. Standard sprinklers and hoses can use 250 gallons per hour so make sure you are diligent about turning them off. Spray patterns should be aimed away from concrete sidewalks or roads to optimize water usage.

Watering plants and grasses in the early morning or late evening will minimize the loss of water to evaporation or wind. It is also a best practice to use mulch or bark in gardens to retain moisture and reduce evaporation by up to 75%.

Picking drought-tolerant plants for your landscape and gardens can reduce water needs while maintaining yard aesthetics. The LSU AgCenter has many landscape and horticulture extension publications and fact sheets for garden plant selection and maintenance.

Remember, every gallon counts. Water conservation not only helps reduce your monthly bills but can also protect the surrounding environment. To start, take an inventory of how much water you use per day or week and then slowly start to implement some of these strategies. Challenge yourself or your household to conserve more water each month. At the end of the year, tally up how many gallons you saved and then challenge your neighbors or community to join in.

REFERENCES

[Start Saving | US EPA](#)

[WaterSense | US EPA](#)

[Drip calculator: How much water does a leaking faucet waste? USGS Water Science School](#)

[Residential Toilets | US EPA](#)

[Saving Water Helps Protect Our Nation's Water Supplies | ENERGY STAR](#)

[Homeowner's Guide to: Household Water Conservation \(colostate.edu\)](#)

[Rainwater Harvesting for Small Nurseries and Home Gardens \(LSUAgCenter.com\)](#)

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