

# Water saving tips

## Quick Tips - for saving water in the home

Every day, there are many simple little things we can do around the house to save water, money and help the environment.

Take a look through the tips below for some clever shortcuts to savings.

1. Encourage your friends and neighbour's to be part of a water-conscious community. Promote water conservation in community newsletters, on bulletin boards and by example. Encourage your friends, neighbour's and co-workers to "do their part."

### 2. Install a rainwater tank

No matter where you are in Australia, a rainwater tank can at least partially offset your mains water usage.

A rainwater tank can collect many thousands of litres of water each year. What size of tank you install will depend on the available space, the size of your roof, and rainfall patterns in your area.

### 3. Reuse your grey water

Whether you use the simple 'bucket' method to collect grey water, or have a complete grey water collection and reuse system installed, reusing this valuable resource can greatly reduce your water use.

It makes very little sense allowing water that has only been used to rinse clothes in a washing machine (unless you are washing nappies), or rinse a human in the shower, to go straight into the sewer.

### 4. Buy efficient appliances

New appliances such as washing machines and dishwashers have water ratings labels on them that tell you how much water they use. If you have an appliance that needs replacing, then you should look for a machine that uses as little water and energy as possible.

5. Checking for leaks in taps, pipes and dishwasher hoses is an easy way to reduce water wastage. Remember, one leaking tap can waste more than 2,000 litres a month.

To check your home for leaks, turn off every tap and appliance that uses water, then read your water meter. Wait a while (overnight if you can), and read again. If the meter has ticked over, something's leaking. Check your toilets and taps first.

6. Insulate hot water pipes. This avoids wasting water while waiting for hot water to flow through and saves energy.

7. Make sure your hot water system thermostat is not set too high. Adding cold water to cool very hot water is wasteful

8. Install water softening systems only when necessary. Save water and salt by running the minimum amount of regenerations necessary to maintain water softness. Turn softeners off while on vacation

9. High water pressure increases flow rates from showers, taps, leaks and drips. If you have extreme high water pressure, a registered plumber can fit a pressure reduction valve at your property boundary

### **In the kitchen**

10. Fit a flow regulator to reduce the water flow to 9 litres per minute or less.

11. The most water efficient methods for cooking vegetables are microwaving, steaming or using a pressure cooker. You can also cut down on water loss by using tight lids on pots and simmering instead of boiling rapidly.

12. Installing water efficient taps or tap aerators is a great, inexpensive way to cut your water usage without you even noticing.

13. Put the plug in the sink when washing your hands instead of holding them under running water.

14. Thaw frozen foods before you need them or use the microwave instead of placing them under running water.

15. Prevent taps from leaking by turning taps off lightly and replace washers as soon as they begin to leak.

16. Automatic dishwashers can use up to 40 litres of water per load. By using a dishwasher with at least a 3 star/AAA rating<sup>1</sup>, you can get this figure down to 18 litres per load and still get the kind of sparkling clean dishes you're used to.

17. It's best to wait until you have a full load in your dishwasher before using it. This saves water and energy, and reduces the amount of detergent entering the sewerage system.

18. Don't rinse dishes before loading, instead use the rinse and hold settings.

19. Keep a container of water in the fridge so that you won't need to run the water down the sink until it's cool enough to drink.

20. Washing fruit and vegies in a half-filled sink instead of under running water is a great way to cut back on water wastage.

21. Rinsing your dishes in a plugged sink rather than under a running tap saves water and is just as easy and effective.

22. Put in the plug as soon as you start running water to fill the sink. Keep the water pressure low while you wait for it to get hot.

23. Use a sink strainer.

24. Try to use phosphate-free, eco-friendly detergents and cleaning products - there's a great range to choose from these days and they're much better for our environment.

25. Garbage-disposal units use about 30 litres of water per day and send a lot of extra rubbish into the sewers. This places an additional load on sewerage treatment plants, Ideally some of your food scraps could be composted or fed into a worm farm rather than being processed down the kitchen sink.

26. When you clean your fish tank, use the 'old' nitrogen and phosphorous-rich water on your plants

27. Think before using the dishwasher. Washing dishes in the sink uses about 15L of water, depending on the capacity and water efficiency rating of your dishwasher, it may be more efficient to wash your dishes in the sink.

28. Use the minimum amount of dishwashing detergent (when washing dishes by hand) as this will reduce the amount of rinsing required.

29. Use only as much water as you need in the kettle to cut your electricity costs at the same time.

30. Don't use running water to defrost frozen food. Ideally place food in refrigerator to defrost overnight - this is also the healthiest option.

31. Where convenient and appropriate, try to capture 'warm-up' water for use on plants, rinsing dishes, washing fruit and vegetables, or other cleaning tasks.

32. Don't put too much water in the pan when boiling food

33. Put a lid on a pot

### **In the laundry**

35. Remember to regularly clean the lint filter on your washing machine.

36. Most washing machines have a load adjustment button or dial, so try to set this to match the amount of washing you're doing. If your machine doesn't have a load adjustment function, try to wait until you have enough washing for a full load.

37. Divert your grey water. The easiest way to re-use water on your garden is to divert the grey water from your washing machine. Ask a hardware supplier for a grey water diverter.

38. Consider buying a front loading machine. They generally use less water than top loaders.

### **In the bathroom**

39. Take short showers. Soap up, wash down, rinse off. A bath uses less water than a long shower and you save on hot water costs at the same time.

40 Installing one of the latest 3 star/AAA rating showerheads<sup>1</sup> can give you a great shower and save you around 10 litres of water a minute. They also save you energy costs, as you'll use less hot water.

41. To rinse your razor, run a little water into a plugged sink. Rinsing your razor under a running tap wastes lots of water.
42. There's no need to leave the tap running while you brush your teeth. Simply wet your toothbrush before you begin and use a glass of water to rinse your mouth.
43. Divert your shower water to the garden. Depending on your plumbing, you may be able to divert your shower water to the garden.
44. Shaving your legs in the shower takes more time and hence uses more water. Fill a container with warm water and use it to shave your legs before you get into the shower - then you only need the running shower to rinse off.
45. Use a shower timer.
46. Bathe your young children together
47. Use a bucket to collect water while waiting for the shower to get hot

#### **In the toilet**

49. Install a dual flush system and always use the half flush. Alternatively purchase and install a flow restrictor from the hardware store so that your system only uses half the amount of water.
50. Repair a continuously leaking or trickling toilet.
51. Use rainwater. Why use potable (drinking) water to flush your toilet? A tank-to-toilet-flush pump system can use water from a rainwater tank, diverting to mains water only if necessary. Consult a plumber or tank retailer for advice.
52. If a new toilet is just out of the question, you can purchase small gadgets to reduce the volume used with each flush of an older style toilet. They work by causing the toilet to flush only for the duration that you hold the button down - so pressing the button for a shorter period will save water. Waterwizz (Toilet Water Saver) and Flexiflush are two examples of these gadgets
53. Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Dispose of tissues, insects and other such waste in the trash rather than the toilet.
54. If you have an older toilet with a large capacity, try putting a bottle filled with water or a brick in the cistern to reduce the amount of water used with each flush.
55. Flushing the toilet less often-the adage 'if it's yellow, let it mellow, if it's brown, flush it down' applies here-unless that's too gross for you!
56. Use the half flush option when possible on dual flush toilets

## **Quick Tips - for saving water in the garden**

There are many simple things we can do in our gardens to save water, money and the environment. Here are a few easy ideas to practice when you're pottering around outdoors.

57. Check the four-day forecast. (Bureau of Meteorology - [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)) If there's rain ahead, let the rain do your watering for you

58. Direct downspouts and other runoff towards shrubs and trees, or collect and use for your garden.

### **Plant Selection**

59. Selecting the right plants for the garden that you require is important. Think very carefully how you will want to use your garden, both now and in future years. The needs of a young family in their first home are very different to those of their parents who may be approaching retirement.

60. Families with children and animals need plenty of open space, suggesting a durable garden with tough plants which can stand some physical abuse and large areas of lawn. A retiring couple with time on their hands may become more active gardeners, suggesting more garden beds with more specialised and delicate plants.

61. In addition to this, it is a great idea to consider drought tollerant plants, which will continue to grow without excess water use.

62. Avoid the installation of ornamental water features (such as fountains) unless the water is recycled

63. Avoid purchasing recreational water toys which require a constant stream of water.

64. Use a screwdriver as a soil probe to test soil moisture. If it goes in easily, don't water.

65. Use a watering can

66. Replace hard surfaces in your garden or grounds with grass or garden beds to reduce stormwater run-off.

### **In the pool**

66. Try to keep the water level of your pool halfway up the skimmer opening. Overfilling the pool stops the skimmer working efficiently and wastes water.

61. A pool cover is a clever way to reduce evaporation and the need to regularly top up your pool's water level. Without a cover, more than half the water in your pool can evaporate over a year.

62. Some water restrictions prohibit filling of new pools

63. Sand filters require backwashing to clean them. Consider installing a cartridge filter which requires only a quick hose down to clean. Cartridges are finer filters leaving your pool clearer.

64. A pool surrounded by pool decking loses less water to evaporation than the same area covered with traditional Grass (Southern Nevada Water Authority).

65. Be alert to covering your pool on windy days especially - as evaporation levels increase with wind strength.

66. Consider the amount of water that splashes out of the pool when people are jumping in and playing about. The "bomb" might be funny for onlookers, but the environment doesn't find it quite as amusing

67. Use a grease pencil to mark the water level of your pool at the skimmer. Check the mark 24 hours later. Your pool should lose no more than 1/4 inch each day.

#### Compost/Mulch

68. Keep all your kitchen scraps, lawn clippings and garden waste - they're perfect for homemade compost, which your soil will love.

#### Watering system

69. If you need a watering system consider installing a drip irrigation system. It will cut wastage by making sure the water goes only where you need it.

#### Lawn care

70. A good soaking every now and then with a hand-held hose will help make your lawn more drought resistant by encouraging deeper roots. (Some water restrictions prohibit watering of lawns)

71. It is important to check if your lawn really needs a drink. If the lawn springs back after stepping on it, it doesn't require watering.

72. When mowing the lawn don't cut the grass shorter than 2cm. If the lawn is too short it will burn because it has no leaf protection. Taller grass also holds and contains water better.

73. To assist the establishment of your new lawn and to minimise the amount of water it requires, it is recommended that you apply a light top dressing to your lawn.

74. Let lawns turn brown during dry seasons as it will recover quickly after rain. Your lawn uses more water per square metre than any other part of your garden.

75. When deciding on a lawn type, go for slow growing, water saving varieties like Palmetto. They have deep roots for drought tolerance and they don't need mowing as much as other varieties.

76. Catch-cups are gauges used to measure the water applied to your lawn. They come in sets of 10, and are available from irrigation retailers. Use them to check your sprinkler system for even distribution, and to find how long to water to give your turf the correct drink.

77. During summer aerate the soil to help improve its condition. Feed and don't over fertilise the lawn.

#### The vegetable and flower garden

If your garden has grown like topsy with little bits all over the place you can change it round.

78. Most of the high water use plants have shallow root systems and can be easily transplanted in winter into their respective groups.

79. Hardy, low water and drought tolerant species cannot normally be moved because of their very deep root systems.

80. Plant during the spring or autumn when the watering requirements are lower.

81. Use deep mulch and add compost to your soil. These add nutrients and help to retain moisture and reduce evaporation.

82. It's best to water the roots and soil around plants rather than spraying the leaves and flowers.

83. Watering your garden in the cool of the early morning or in the evening reduces water loss through evaporation.

84. Take some time to relax in your garden and water by hand with a can or trigger nozzle. It's one of the best ways to make sure your plants get just the right amount of water.

85. Paths, patios and driveways must never be hosed. Use a broom, rake or outdoor blower or vacuum instead.

86. When planting new garden beds, group plants with similar watering needs together.

87. Keep planted areas dense and consolidated. Sparse scattered plants are more difficult to water efficiently than ones that are in defined areas.

88. For hanging baskets, planters and pots, place ice cubes under the moss or dirt to give your plants a cool drink of water and help eliminate water overflow.

89. Adding organic matter to the soil improves both its moisture and nutrient holding capacity thus saving on water and fertiliser. It is particularly important to improve the top 15-20 cm of soil where the feeder roots of plants will develop. Old animal manures, compost and proprietary products are ideal soil improvers. Mix them in equal parts with the soil prior to planting out.

90. Soak pot plants for a few minutes in a sink or bucket of water. The water will soak in, push out trapped air in the soil so your plants will be healthier and you use less water.