

TIPS FOR CONSERVING WELL WATER

Outside the Home

Outdoor water consumption accounts for almost half the water used by the home owner, and therefore provides the greatest single opportunity for conserving water. It is important in B.C. to follow your local restrictions on water use.

The following information contains useful tips on how to conserve water regardless of whether your water supply comes from your own well or you are part of a large municipal water district.

Lawn and Garden Sprinklers

- Water in the morning before 10:00 a.m.
- Avoid watering in the heat of the day, to prevent evaporative losses -- and late in the day, to prevent fungus and other lawn diseases.
- Depending on the weather, it's generally better to water once a week and provide 2.5 to 3.8 centimeters (1 to 1.5 inches) of water. (If it's hot, you might have to water more often.)
- Time how long it takes to apply 2.5 centimeters (1 inch) of water by placing a flat-bottomed can about 1.8 meters (6 feet) away from the sprinkler.
 - If you can water 2.5 centimeters (1 inch) at a time, avoiding runoff, this is usually enough to penetrate the soil 10 to 15 centimeters (4 to 6 inches).
 - If your soil begins to runoff after only 3.8 centimeters (1.5 inches) of water, let it soak in, and then water another centimeter (0.5 inch) as soon as you can.
 - These methods encourage deeper, healthier root systems and allow the lawn to go without water for a longer time.
- Set a kitchen timer or invest in a sprinkler timer to help prevent overwatering, if you don't have an automatic sprinkling system. Outdoor faucets can flow at more than 1,100 liters (300 US gallons) per hour. A lot of water can be wasted in a short period of time if you forget to turn off your sprinklers.
- Do not mow lawns too short. This will help shade roots from sunlight and encourage deeper roots. Taller grass requires less water. Avoid cutting more than 2.5 centimeters (1 inch) at a time.
- Consider letting your lawn brown out. It will come back.
- Position sprinklers so water doesn't land in the gutters or any paved areas.
- Don't water on windy days. Water will go everywhere except where it is needed.
- Consider installing drip irrigation systems around trees and shrubs. Drip irrigation allows water to flow slowly to roots. This encourages strong root systems and reduces water loss due to evaporation.
- Consider collecting rain water from your roof into a closed barrel or cistern to water your garden.

Mulching and Weeds

- Lay mulch around trees and plants at least 2.5 to 5 centimeters (1 to 2 inches) deep, in order to retain moisture, slow evaporation, and discourage weed growth.
- Weeds rob your plants of water and nutrients. Try to keep your lawn and garden weed-free. Spot spray or remove weeds as they appear, using an environmentally safe product.

Your Soil: Help it hold the right amount of water.

- Clay Soil: Add organic material such as compost or peat moss. Clay soil absorbs water very slowly, so water only as fast as the soil can absorb. Don't waste water by letting it run off.
- Sandy Soil: Water can run through sandy soil so quickly that plants don't have a chance to absorb it. Add organic material to supplement the soil and slow down water flow.
- Loamy Soil: Loamy soil is the best. It's a combination of sand, silt, and clay. It absorbs water readily and stores it for use by plants. It can retain its loamy quality by continual additions of organic material each year

Leaks

- Check for leaks in pipes, hoses, faucets, and couplings. Leaks can waste a lot of water.

Pools

- If you own a pool, get a cover for it to help prevent evaporation. An average-sized pool can lose about 3800 liters (1,000 US gallons) of water per month. A pool cover can cut this loss by up to 90%. It can also help keep the water cleaner and warmer, saving water and energy if your pool has a filtration and heating system.

Cleaning Driveways

- Use a broom, not a hose, to clean driveways, sidewalks, and other hard surfaces.

Car Washing

- Rinse the car once, wash from a bucket, rinse quickly again. Be sure to use a shutoff nozzle on your hose. Consider washing your car on grass or gravel rather than pavement.
- In areas and times of very low water supplies, practicing xeriscaping landscaping (quality landscaping that conserves water and protects the environment) and not washing your car are options that should be considered.

Inside the Home

Bathroom

- Repair Leaks
 Check faucets and hose connections for leaks.
 Inspect pipes for pinhole leaks, and leaking joints. A slow drip can waste 57 to 76 liters (15 to 20 US gallons) a day. Fix it and you will save almost 23,000 liters (6,000 US gallons) a year.

- **Showers and Baths**

Take shorter showers. You can save 19 liters (5 US gallons) every minute.

Use low volume showerheads. They are inexpensive and can pay for themselves in water, sewer and energy savings, in less than a year. For a five-minute shower they can reduce water usage from about 47 liters (12 US gallons) to 151 liters (40 US gallons).

When taking a bath, close the tub drain before turning on the water and fill the tub up halfway or less. A full tub can hold more than 189 liters (50 US gallons) of water.

- **Toilets**

Flush only when needed.

Put a water-displacement device (e.g., a brick, filled bottle of water) inside the toilet tank or replace your toilet with a high-efficiency, low-flush toilet that uses only 6 liters (1.6 US gallons) per flush. Toilets older than 1992 typically flush at 13 to 19 liters (3.5 to 5 US gallons) per flush.

Check for leaks. Drip 10 drops of food coloring into the toilet tank to see if there is a leak.

- **Brushing Your Teeth or Shaving**

Leave the water off when brushing your teeth or shaving. You'll save 11 to 27 liters (3 to 7 US gallons) of water each minute, if you don't already have a low-flow faucet aerator. If you have an aerator you will save about 9 liters (2.5 US gallons) per minute.

Kitchen

- **Repair Leaks**

Check faucets and hose connections for leaks.

Inspect pipes for pinhole leaks, and leaking joints. A slow drip can waste 7 to 8 liters (15 to 20 US gallons) a day. Fix it and you will save almost 23,000 liters (6,000 US gallons) a year.

- **Drinking Water**

Keep a container of cool water in the refrigerator instead of running the faucet.

Use faucets at a low volume.

Install high efficiency, low-flow faucet aerators that use no more than 9 liters (2.5 US gallons) of water per minute. Most faucets use between 11 and 26 liters (3 and 7 US gallons) per minute.

- **Garbage Disposal**

Use the sink disposal sparingly.

Compost kitchen scraps rather than flushing them down the drain.

- **Cleaning Vegetables and Fruits**

Clean vegetables and fruit in a pan of water, not under a running faucet.

Use a vegetable brush to remove dirt.

- **Defrosting Food**

Defrost in the refrigerator instead of running water. This may require taking food out of the freezer a couple of days in advance, but it will help reduce water bills.

- **Dishwasher**

Run the dishwasher only when it's fully loaded. Most dishwashers use between 45 and 57 liters (12 and 15 US gallons) of water, full or empty.

When loading the dishwasher, scrape food off of dishes and pots instead of rinsing them.

Check out water-saving dishwashers, if you're thinking about buying a new one.

- Washing Dishes by Hand

Fill the sink or a pan with soapy water, instead of letting the faucet run while soaping dishes.

Don't let the faucet run while rinsing off dishes. Rinse dishes in a filled sink or a pan of water.

Laundry

- Washing Machine

Run the washing machine only when it's fully loaded. Every load uses up to 190 liters (50 US gallons).

Some washing machines have controls that let you select the load size. Select the size that's right for your load, no bigger.

Washing machines use 114 to 189 liters (30 and 50 US gallons) of water per full load.

Pre-soak clothes in the washing machine only when absolutely necessary.

Check out front-loading washers, if you're thinking about buying a new washing machine. These washers can cost more, but they use 1/3 less water and half the energy per load than top-loading washing machines.

Avoid using extra cycles whenever possible.