

WATER CONSERVATION TIPS

Using water, specifically groundwater (which provides 60 percent of the water used in Texas), more efficiently will not only save money but, more importantly, will protect the quality of life of current and future Texans. With the vastness of Texas, it's easy to forget two important facts about our state: 1) we are subject to frequent droughts and, 2) our population is projected to nearly double in the next 50 years. To ensure that we have enough water, we need to reduce the amount of water we waste. A few small changes in your water use habits can make a huge difference in water savings.

Using efficient showerheads and aerators on your faucets can significantly reduce the amount of water you use. In fact, installing an efficient showerhead is one of the most effective water saving steps you can take inside your house. Also, you can save a little more water by getting into the shower as soon as possible—don't let the water run too long while warming it up.

When possible, update and replace old toilets, washing machines, and dishwashers. New efficient models can save you thousands of gallons per year.

An older clothes washer will use up to 23 gallons per load, whereas a new energy efficient model may use as little as 13 gallons. Considering that the average household washes about 300 loads per year, the numbers add up quickly. Another thing to keep in mind is that if you wash with hot water, up to 90% of the cost to wash those close is simply for heating the water. Only use hot water when necessary so you'll save on your electrical bill and reduce the impact on the water-energy nexus (a complex relationship between the production of electricity and water).

In the kitchen, a water efficient dishwasher can save over 1,000 gallons of water per year. Keep in mind, 1,000 gallons per home may not seem significant, but multiply that by a neighborhood and 1,000 gallons per home will add up to quite a lot. Newer machines have more effective water jets and sensors that will do a better job with less water. And for those tough dishes, let them soak in some water instead of trying to scrub them clean with running water.

Newer water efficient toilets will use only about 1—1.5 gallons of water per flush. And be sure that you keep aware for any leaks. A leaking toilet can waste quite a bit of water, possibly thousands of gallons a month in extreme cases. It is estimated that 10% of all homes in the U.S. have water leaks wasting 90+ gallons of water per day.

Outdoors, planting well adapted and/or native shrubs, trees, and grass is key to watering efficiently. Drought and heat tolerant species can survive cool winters and dry summers, saving not only water but your time and effort due to lower maintenance requirements.

Also, be sure that you water at the right time of day. It is estimated that watering during the hottest time of the day will waste 20% - 25% percent of the water due to evaporation. Prevent this by watering in the morning (before 11:00 a.m. is recommended). Also avoid watering on windy days as this will significantly increase the amount of water loss due to evaporation. Drip irrigation systems are a great way to water plants and shrubs efficiently with a minimal amount of water. Combined with proper bedding/mulching, this can save you hundreds, if not thousands, of gallons of water each summer and, if you add a timer to the system your plants will require less personal attention.

As for your lawn, taller grass holds moisture better. Refrain from cutting off more than 1/3 of its length at one time. During a drought many grasses will go dormant, so learn more about your grass and you may find that you do not need to water it at all.

One last note, for those of you who live in an area with a homeowner association, in 2013 the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 198. Homeowner association may require approval of any changes to landscaping, but S.B. 198 prohibits an association from restricting a property owner's decision to make water-wise landscape choices.