

Saving Water Indoors

Are you using more water than you thought?

Bathrooms

Inside your house, bathroom facilities claim over 50 percent of the water used. Toilets were used nearly 27 percent of the bathroom water, showers 17 percent, faucets about eight percent and baths two percent.

Toilets

When purchasing new or replacement toilets, consider low-volume units which use less than half the water of older models. Low-volume units are now required by local building codes. Check for toilet tank leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the toilet bowl within 30 minutes. Check toilet for worn out, corroded or bent parts. Most replacement parts are inexpensive, readily available and easily installed. If the toilet handle frequently sticks in the flush position letting water run constantly, replace or adjust it. Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Dispose of waste in the trash rather than the toilet.

Showers

Take shorter showers. Replace your showerhead with an ultra-low-flow version. Some units are available that allow you to shut off the flow without adjusting the water temperature knobs. Place a bucket in the shower to catch excess water and use it to water plants. The same technique can be used when washing dishes or vegetables in the sink.

Faucets

Retrofit all household faucets by installing aerators with flow restrictors to slow the flow of water. Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. If your faucets are dripping at a rate of one drop per second, you can expect to waste 2,700 gallons per year.

Clothes Washing

Operate clothes washers only when they are fully loaded. Set the water level for the size of load you are using.

Dishwashing

Operate automatic dishwashers only when they are fully loaded. When washing dishes by hand, fill one sink or basin with soapy water. Quickly rinse under a slow-moving stream from the faucet.

Water Waste

Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it such as watering a plant or garden, or for cleaning around the house. Don't let water run while shaving or washing your face. Brush your teeth while waiting for water to get hot, then wash or shave after filling the basin.

Miscellaneous

Store drinking water in the refrigerator. Don't let the tap run while you are waiting for cool water to flow. Do not use water to thaw meat or other frozen foods. Kitchen sink disposals require lots of water to operate properly. Start a composting pile as an alternate method of disposing of food waste, instead of using the garbage disposal. Garbage disposals also can add 50 percent to the volume of solids in the sewer system or they lead to problems with a septic tank. Consider installing an instant water heater so you don't have to let the water run while it heats up. This will reduce water heating cost for your household.

Water Savings Outdoors

With an average of about 17 inches of precipitation per year, Southwest Colorado is considered a semi-arid climate. Typically, especially in the summertime, at least 50 percent of water consumed by households is used outdoors. That is why it is important to conserve water as much as possible by following some of the following water-saving tips.

Waterwise Landscapes

- Group plants with similar water needs.
- Conduct a soil test to determine nutrient needs.
- Prepare the soil by adding organic matter.
- Minimize grassy lawn areas
- Consider types of turf grass that use less water than Kentucky bluegrass.
- Irrigate according to the requirements of the plants, not on a fixed schedule. As a general rule, lawns and most plants only need watering every 5 days in the summer.
- Check the moisture content of the soil to a depth of 4-8 inches. If the soil is dry, water; if not, delay watering.
- Water deeply and thoroughly to encourage deep roots.
- Water lawns during the early morning hours when temperatures and wind speed are the lowest in order to reduce losses from evaporation.
- Do not water on windy days.
- Aerate in the spring and fall to reduce soil compaction and improve water penetration.
- Install an automatic timer on irrigation systems.
- Set up a rain gauge to determine how much water the landscape has received.
- Install a rain sensor device that will override the sprinkler system when adequate rainfall has occurred.
- Change your water schedule to accommodate seasonal changes.
- Utilize irrigation methods that are the most water-efficient for each application, such as micro and drip irrigation or soaker hoses for shrubs.
- Immediately shut off irrigation and make adjustments whenever water falls or runs onto hard surfaces such as sidewalks, streets, or driveways.
- Regularly check and maintain sprinkler systems, hoses, connectors, and spigots.
- Do not leave sprinklers or hoses unattended. Garden hoses can use 600 gallons or more in a few hours.
- Outfit a hose with an adjustable shut-off nozzle so that water flows only as needed. When finished turn it off at the faucets instead of the nozzle to avoid leaks.
- Use water retaining basins to allow water to be concentrated at the plant root zone.
- Use native and drought-tolerant plants. Once established, they do not need to be watered as frequently and usually will survive a dry period with very little watering.
- Use mulch around plants to reduce evaporation, minimize erosion. Moderate soil temperature, promote plant growth and control weeds.
- Conduct routine maintenance by dead-heading perennials, pruning shrubs, and eliminating weeds.
- Avoid over fertilizing as it increases the need for water.
- Raise the lawn mower blades to at least three inches to encourage grass roots to grow deeper, shade the root system, and hold soil moisture better.
- Leave the grass clippings on the lawn to add organic material and nitrogen to the soil; this does not contribute to thatch.
- Avoid the installation of ornamental water features, such as fountains, unless the water is recycled.

Cleaning/Car Washing

- Use a broom when cleaning the driveway or sidewalk.
- For car washing, use biodegradable soap and water from a bucket and a hose with a shut-off nozzle. Better yet, use a commercial car wash facility that recycles its water.