

Saving Water, Saving Our Oceans



The Gulf Oil Disaster highlighted what a precious resource our water supply is, a resource we often take for granted. Water is essential to life on earth, we need it to grow food, keep clean, provide power, and to stay alive! Since 97.5% of the earth's water is salt water, only 2.5% of it is usable by the 6 billion people on the planet today. As our population grows, more people are using up this limited resource - and we are already using and polluting it faster than we can replenish our clean supply. It is imperative that we use our water wisely and not waste it. Every little bit counts!

Here are a few things that you can do to save this valuable resource:

1. Bathrooms and Faucets:

- a. Repair any leaks to toilets, pipes, and faucets, and make sure there are water-saving aerators on faucets.
- b. Don't let water run unnecessarily while you brush teeth, shave, wash your face, or shampoo hair. Teach your children to turn off faucets tightly after each use.
- c. Don't use your toilet as a trash bin.
- d. Shorten your shower, even by a minute or two, and get a low-flow water-efficient showerhead.

2. Clothes Washing:

- a. Run your washing machine (and dishwasher) only when full, or properly set them for size of load you are using.
- b. Reuse your clothing and towels as much as possible before washing.
- c. Wash dark clothes in cold water.
- d. When shopping for a new washing machine, compare resource savings among Energy Star models.

3. Dishwashing and Kitchens:

- a. When washing dishes by hand, fill a sink basin or large container with soap and water scrub all dishes before rinsing. Similarly, wash fruits and vegetables in a pan of water, instead of freely running the tap.
- b. Scrape dishes into the compost (or trash) rather than rinsing. New dishwashers require little or no pre-rinsing, and disposals use much water to operate properly.
- c. Designate one glass for your drinking water each day or refill a water bottle.
- d. Never put water down the drain when there may be another use for it, such as watering plants/garden, or cleaning. (e.g. reuse water used for boiling.)

4. Lawns and Gardening

- a. Water your lawn and garden in the morning or evening when temperatures are cooler to minimize evaporation. Set kitchen timer while watering.
- b. Check for soil moisture before watering - if still wet two inches below, you don't need to water. Hand water, instead of using a sprinkler whenever possible.
- c. Aerate your lawn at least once a year so water can reach the roots rather than run off the surface.
- d. Adjust your lawn mower to a higher setting. A taller lawn shades roots and holds soil moisture better.
- e. Plant items that need less watering, and consider having less lawn! (e.g. create patio, rock garden, ground cover, shrubs, walkway). Plant with finished compost to add water-holding and nutrient-rich matter to the soil.
- f. Set up rain barrels under a rain gutter and around your property to catch water to use for watering, washing car, etc.

5. Tips that help our oceans:

- a. Buy sustainable seafood locally caught whenever possible. Many marine species are overfished, upsetting our ocean's ecosystem. Research ocean-friendly seafood at www.neaq.org.
- b. Use less plastic and always recycle. 10 million tons of plastic ends up in the ocean annually, much of it has collected in a spiral in the N Pacific, the size of Texas.

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- c. Don't pollute your watershed - stop using toxic cleaners and pesticides, dispose of drugs and personal care products properly. Similarly, pick up after pets.
- d. Support legislation to conserve water, monitor water-quality, and support the right for clean water for everyone: e.g. www.water.org, www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/trust-fund, www.blueplanetproject.net

6. Other Tips:

- a. Use a commercial car wash that recycles water - or use eco-friendly waterless car wash kits.
- b. Make suggestions to your employer about ways to save water at work.
- c. Reduce your energy use. (Producing electricity uses a lot of water.)
- d. Go to www.H2Oconserve.org and calculate how much water you use (and see more ways to cut back)