

Water Conservation in and outside your Townhouse

Home water use varies considerably, depending upon the number of people in a household, plumbing fixtures, appliances, yard/patio plants and other factors. The largest water users inside the home are toilets, washing machines, faucets, showers and dishwashers.

Toilets

Toilets made before 1993 use 3.5 to 8 gallons per flush (gpf). High efficiency toilets manufactured after 1993 use 1.6 gpf or less. The date of manufacture of most toilets is on the underside of the tank lid. A family of four can save 14,000 to 25,000 gal/yr by switching from conventional toilets to the newer, more efficient ones. Additional water savings can occur by making sure your toilet is not leaking and that the flapper is working properly. Here are other suggestions for increasing your toilet-use efficiency.

- Install vacuum assisted, low-volume toilets.
- Consider not flushing the toilet unless absolutely necessary.
- Regularly check for toilet leaks by placing food coloring in your toilet tank. Repairing leaking toilets can save more than 600 gallons of water per month.
- Do not use your toilet as a wastebasket.
- Make sure your toilet flapper does not remain open after flushing.
- Avoid using toilet bowl cleaners such as toilet tank tablets. These products affect the pH of water in your toilet tank and can cause leaks by damaging the rubber and plastic parts of your toilet.

Washing Machine Efficiency

Conventional washing machines use between 35 to 50 gallons per load (gpl). The newer front-loading machines are more efficient and use between 18 to 20 gpl. Below are suggestions for reducing water use while clothes washing.

- Run the washing machine only when you have a full load of clothes.
- For lightly soiled laundry loads, use the shortest wash cycle.
- To avoid redundant washing, pre-treat stains on your clothes.
- Select the minimum water volume per load if your washer has a variable water volume setting.
- Regularly check washing machine hoses for leaks.

Faucet Efficiency

- Install low-flow faucet aerators on all your household faucets. Some aerators can restrict flow to less than 1.0 gallons per minute (gpm).
- Do not run the faucet continuously while washing dishes and hands, shaving, or brushing your teeth.
- Checking and repairing faucet leaks can save up to 140 gallons of water per week.

Estimated Facet Leakage Rates (# of drips)

60 drops/minute = 192 gallons/month

90 drops/minute = 210 gallons/month

120 drops/minute = 429 gallons/month

Showering Efficiency

Showerheads currently manufactured in the U.S. have a flow-rate of 2.5 gallons per minute (gpm) or less. Here are some suggestions for increasing shower-use efficiency.

- Install a low-flow showerhead if you do not already have one.
- Keep your showers brief. A shower that lasts for five minutes using a low-flow showerhead uses 12 gallons of water. If possible, use a watch to time yourself while you are in the shower.
- Turn off the water while you lather up with soap and shampoo.
- Irrigate your indoor plants by placing a bucket in the shower to collect the water while waiting for it to warm up.
- Check the flow rate of your showerhead by using a 5-gallon bucket and a clock. Turn the shower on full and place a 5-gallon bucket under the shower for two minutes. A 2.5 gpm showerhead will fill the bucket up in that two-minute time frame.
- Check and repair leaks in the tub diverter valve.

Dishwasher Efficiency

- Install a high efficiency dishwasher machine.
- Running the dishwasher only when it's full can save 1,000 gallons of water per month.
- Running a full dishwasher usually uses less water than washing the same number of dishes by hand.
- Because the drying cycle of most dishwashing machines uses 1,500 watts per cycle, air or hand drying the dishes is more efficient and less expensive.

Mulching for Water Conservation

Mulching reduces evaporation from the soil surface and reduces irrigation needs by approximately 50 percent. The following is a list of suggestions for using mulch in your yard or patio garden.

- Use an organic mulch to a depth of approximately 4 inches, depending upon the particle size of the mulching material.

- Grass clippings can be used as mulch in the vegetable garden. Do not use clippings from lawns treated with herbicides or other pesticides in the past month.
- For planting beds, use spun or woven permeable landscape fabrics rather than solid sheet plastics.
- Black or dark-colored plastic mulch conserves moisture and increases soil temperature in vegetable gardens.

Conserving Water in the Vegetable Garden

- Plant in blocks instead of rows to create shade for the root systems and reduce evaporation.
- Group plants with similar water needs together.
- Check the soil for moisture before you water and do not water until the soil has dried out to a depth of at least 4 inches.
- Control weeds that compete with vegetables for water.

Additional Ways to Conserve Water

- Collect the water you use for rinsing fruits and vegetables and reuse it to water houseplants and/or shrubs.
- Use a broom instead of a hose to sweep your driveway and you can save between 50 and 80 gallons of water.
- **Car washing is NOT ALLOWED in Town & Country Village.** See Rules & Regulations, Section VI (H).

Acknowledgements

Material has been adapted from:

Colorado State University Extension

[Water Conservation In and Around the Home - 9.952 - Extension \(colostate.edu\)](https://www.colostate.edu/extension/programs/water-conservation/)