

Water Tips

Save Water Indoors

- Wash only full loads in your washing machine, or adjust the water level to reflect the size of the load.
- Pay attention to your water bill and become familiar with your water meter—use them to track your water use and detect leaks.
- Purchase appliances that offer water- and energy-efficient cycle options.
- Fix leaky plumbing fixtures, faucets and appliances in the house. *A dripping faucet or fixture can waste 3 gallons a day or 1095 gallons per year.*
- Show children how to turn off the faucets completely after each use.
- Locate your master water shut-off valve so that water can be saved if a pipe bursts.
- Install aerators on every faucet. This could save you as much as 1 gallon every minute you use them.
- Be aware! Listen for drips and leaks around the house.

Conserve in the Bathroom

- Switch to an ultra low-flow showerhead. This could save you as much as 2.5 gallons every minute you shower.
- Take shorter showers—try to keep it under 5 minutes.
- Install ultra-low-flush toilets or place a plastic bottle filled with water or sand in your toilet tank to reduce the amount of water used in each flush.
- If you have an old toilet you may want to consider picking up free dye tabs in the office to check your toilet for silent leaks. Put dye tablets or food coloring in your toilet tank and wait to see if the color appears in the bowl (without flushing). If it does, you have a leak!
- Check to assure that your toilet's flapper valve doesn't stay open after flushing.
- When taking a bath, start filling the tub with the drain already plugged instead of waiting first for the water to get warm. Adjust the temperature as the tubs begins to fill.
- Turn the faucet off while you shave, brush your teeth and lather up your hands.
- Don't use the toilet as a garbage can. Place a trash can next to the toilet and use it instead.
- Buy an electric razor or fill the sink with a little water to rinse your razor, instead of rinsing in running water.
- Take a short shower instead of a bath. While a five minute shower uses a 12 to 25 gallons, a full tub requires about 70 gallons.

Conserve in the Kitchen

- If you wash dishes by hand, fill one half of the sink with soapy water and the other with clean water instead of letting the water run.

- Place a pitcher of water in the refrigerator instead of letting the tap run to get a cool drink.
- Water your houseplants with water saved from washing your fruits and vegetables, waiting for the water to warm up, or even when you clean your fish tank!
- Select one glass to use for drinking each day. If you do this, your dishwasher will take longer to fill up and it will not need to be run as frequently.
- Thaw foods in the refrigerator or in a bowl of hot water instead of using running water.
- Let your pots and pans soak instead of letting the water run while you clean them.
- Purchase an instant water heater for your kitchen sink so you don't waste water while it heats up.
- Scrape the food on your dishes into the garbage instead of using water to rinse it down the disposal.

Save Water Outdoors

- Try planting drought-tolerant and regionally adapted plants in areas that are hard to water or that receive little use. This may include narrow strips near sidewalks or driveways and steep hills.
- Cover pools and spas to avoid evaporation.
- Sweep your driveways and sidewalks with a broom instead of spraying them off with a hose.
- Check outdoor faucets, pipes, hoses and pools for leaks.
- Change your lawn mower to a 3-inch clipping height and try not to cut off more than one-third of the grass height when you mow.
- Consider replacing infrequently used lawn areas with low-water use plants or ground covers.
- Apply as little fertilizer to your lawn as possible. Applying excess fertilizer increases water consumption and actually creates more mowing for you! Use iron-based fertilizers to simply “green-up” your lawn instead.
- Recycle and reuse the water in fountains and other ornamental water fixtures.
- Check the level in your pool using a grease pencil. Your pool shouldn't lose more than ¼ inch each day. If it is losing more than this, check elsewhere for leaks.
- Avoid bursting or freezing pipes by winterizing your outdoor spigots.
- Use a bucket of soapy water to wash your car, or simply place a shut-off nozzle on the end of your hose.

Avoid Brown Spots

- Water brown spots in your lawn with a hose instead of increasing the irrigation time on your timer.
- Place children's water toys on any dry spots in your lawn.
- Instead of washing your car in the street or driveway, park it on the lawn where it won't go to waste.

- Take the pets outside to be bathed—pick a dry spot in the lawn to wash them.

Conserve in Your Landscape

- Visually inspect your sprinkler system once a month during daylight hours. Check and fix any tilted, clogged or broken heads. Although watering at night is recommended, you won't notice problems with your system unless you see it in operation.
- Avoid watering your landscape during the hottest hours of the day (10 am until 6 pm) to minimize evaporation.
- Water your landscape in cycles by reducing the number of minutes on your timer and using multiple start times spaced one hour apart. This allows the water to soak into the soil and avoids runoff.
- Water your lawn only when it needs it. If you leave footprints on the grass, it is usually time to water.
- Turn your sprinkler system off during or after a rainstorm and leave it off until the plants need to be watered again.
- Consider installing an automatic rain shutoff device on your sprinkler system.
- Install drip irrigation systems for trees, shrubs and flowers.
- Check your sprinkler valves for leaks when checking all your heads.
- Avoid watering your lawn on windy days.
- Try to add more days between watering. Allowing your lawn to dry out between watering creates deeper roots and allows you to water deeper and less often.
- Place a rain gauge in your backyard to monitor rainfall and irrigation.
- Set the kitchen timer when you water by hose.
- Test soil moisture with a soil probe or screwdriver before you water. If the soil is moist, don't water!
- Watch out for broken sprinklers, open hydrants, broken pipes and any other significant water losses in your community. Be sure to notify the property owner or the water district of the problem.
- Make sure the water coming out of your sprinklers is not misting and drifting away in the wind. This is usually caused by too high of pressure—if necessary, install a pressure reducer on your sprinkler line.
- Turn back your automatic timers in the spring and fall. Water only once or twice a week during the spring and fall.

Irrigation Tips

[Watering Can Be Efficient Pamphlet](#)

www.epa.gov/watersense

www.irrigation.org

www.smartirrigationmonth.org

Conserve with Your Plants

- Plant your garden when temperatures are cooler and plants require less water—this is also less stressful for the plants.
- Use a thick layer of mulch around landscape plants and on bare soil surfaces—this reduces evaporation, promotes plant growth and reduces weeds.
- Collect the runoff from your roof in a barrel and use it on your plants and garden.
- Arrange plants in your garden according to watering need. This is called “Hydro zoning”.
- Remove weeds from the garden—this helps cut down on excess water consumption due to plant competition.
- Don't overreact and try to drown the brown spots in your lawn. Simply moisten the area up a bit and the grass will green up in a few days.
- Create a compost pile and use it in your yard to add needed nutrients and organic matter to the soil.
- Don't over-water your plants. Learn how much water they need and how best to apply just the right amount.

Be a Good Citizen

- Dispose of motor oil, paint and pesticides properly by taking them to a certified disposal or recycling site. Dumping these materials down the drain or on the ground is illegal and ends up polluting our water resources.
- Become informed about water conservation and encourage your employer, local government, school system and neighbors to promote conservation programs and initiatives in your community.
- Support water recycling projects in your community.
- Attend public hearings and meeting on water issues.
- Consider the impact of land-use and zoning decisions of your water resources.
- Write to your public officials about obvious mismanagement or disregard for community water resources.
- Volunteer to help clean up a water body or promote water conservation awareness in your community.
- Vote for programs or candidates that protect the environment.
- Know who operates your water utilities.
- Know the name and location of your watershed.
- Learn about costs associated with water supply and wastewater treatment. *The average person uses 7 to 10 thousand gallons per quarter.*
- Join a local group committed to natural resources protection.
- Educate your friends and family about water conservation.

Water & Wastewater Tip, courtesy of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

Spring rain brings a refreshing change to lawns and gardens, but not to urban lakes and rivers. The storm drain on your street collects the water from your roof, driveway and sidewalk and funnels it directly in your local water body. Nutrients from grass and leaves, pet waste and fertilizers "enrich" lakes-feeding algae blooms and harming fish.

Toxic chemicals from hose-and-bucket car washes and household chemical spills add up, taking a nasty toll on our favorite swimming areas and fishing spots. Another pollutant is soil — if landscapers and builders aren't careful, soil runs off into local water bodies, reducing the clarity of water and hurting fish. MPCA offers these tips to keep storm water clean.

- Use mulch and vegetation to keep soil from washing away.
- Use non-phosphorous fertilizer on established lawns.
- Sweep or rake grass and leaves away from street curbs.
- Mulch and compost grass clippings and leaves.
- Keep paved surfaces to a minimum.
- Capture water runoff with a rain garden and rain barrels.
- Wash your car on the grass.
- Keep chemicals away from storm drains.
- Collect your pet's waste.
- Aim your rain-gutter downspouts onto grass.