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Residential Brokerage

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1. Check faucets and pipes for leaks - A small drip from a worn faucet washer can waste 20 gallons of water per day. Larger leaks can waste hundreds of gallons.

2. Do not use the toilet as an ashtray or wastebasket Every time you flush a cigarette butt, facial tissue or other small bit of trash - water is wasted.

3. Check your toilets for leaks - Put a little food coloring in your toilet tank. If, without flushing, the color begins to appear in the bowl within 30 minutes, then you have a leak that should be corrected immediately.

4. Use your water meter to check for hidden water leaks - Read the house water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, there is a leak.

5. Install "water saving" shower heads and low-flow faucet aerators - Inexpensive water-saving low-flow shower heads or restrictors are easy for the homeowner to install. Also, long, hot showers can use five to ten gallons every un-needed minute. Limit your showers to the time it takes to soap up, wash down and rinse off. "Low-flow" means it uses less than 2.5 gallons per minute.

6. Put plastic bottles or a float booster in your toilet tank - To cut down on water waste, put an inch or two of sand or pebbles inside each of two plastic bottles to weigh them down. Fill the bottles with water, screw the lids on, and put them in your toilet tank safely away from the operating mechanisms. Or, buy an inexpensive tank bank or a float booster. This may save ten or more gallons of water per day.

7. Insulate your water pipes - It's easy and inexpensive with "pre-slit" foam pipe insulation. You'll get hot water faster, plus avoid wasting water while it heats up.

8. Take shorter showers - One way to cut down on water use is to turn off the shower after soaping up, then turn it back on to rinse. A four-minute shower uses approximately 20 to 40 gallons of water.

9. Turn off the water after you wet your toothbrush There is no need to keep the water running while brushing your teeth. Just wet your brush and fill a glass for mouth rinsing.

10. Rinse your razor in the sink - Fill the sink with a few inches of warm water. This will rinse your razor just as well as running water, with far less waste of water.

11. Use your dishwasher and clothes washer for only full loads - Automatic dishwashers and clothes washers should be fully loaded for optimum water conservation. Most makers of dishwashing soap recommend not pre-rinsing dishes, which is a big water saver.

12. Minimize use of kitchen sink garbage disposal units - In-sink 'garburators' require a lot of water to operate properly, and also add considerably to the volume of solids in a septic tank, which can lead to maintenance problems. Start a compost pile as an alternate method of disposing food waste.



13. When washing dishes by hand, don't leave the water running for rinsing - If you have a double-basin, fill one with soapy water and one with rinse water. If you have a single-basin sink, gather washed dishes in a dish rack and rinse them with a spray device or a pan full of hot water. Dual-swivel aerators are available to make this easier. If using a dishwasher, there is usually no need to pre-rinse the dishes.

14. Don't let the faucet run while you clean vegetables - Just rinse them in a stoppered sink or a pan of clean water. Use a dual-setting aerator.

15. Keep a bottle of drinking water in the fridge
Running tap water to cool it off for drinking water is wasteful. Store drinking water in the fridge in a safe drinking bottle. If you are filling water bottles to bring along on outdoor hikes, consider buying a LifeStraw personal water filter that enables users to drink water safely from rivers, lakes or any available body of water.

YARD - WATER CONSERVATION (#'s 16-25)

16. Plant drought-resistant lawns, shrubs and plants
If you are planting a new lawn, or over-seeding an existing lawn, use drought-resistant grasses such as the new "Eco-Lawn".

17. Put a layer of mulch around trees and plants
Mulch will slow evaporation of moisture while discouraging weed growth. Adding 2 - 4 inches of organic material, such as compost or bark mulch, will increase the ability of the soil to retain moisture. Press the mulch down around the drip line of each plant to form a slight depression, which will prevent or minimize water runoff.

18. Don't water the gutter - Position your sprinklers so water lands on the lawn or garden, not on paved areas. Also, avoid watering on windy days.

19. Water your lawn only when it needs it - A good way to see if your lawn needs watering is to step on the grass. If it springs back up when you move, it doesn't need water. If it stays flat, the lawn is ready for watering. Letting the grass grow taller (to 3") will also promote water retention in the soil.

20. Deep-soak your lawn - When watering the lawn, do it long enough for the moisture to soak down to the roots where it will do the most good. A light sprinkling can evaporate quickly and tends to encourage shallow root systems. Put an empty tuna can on your lawn and when the can is full then you've watered it about the right amount.

21. Water during the early parts of the day; avoid watering when it's windy - Early morning is generally better than dusk since it helps prevent the growth of fungus. Early watering, and late watering, also reduce water loss to evaporation. Watering early in the day is also the best defense against slugs and other garden pests. Try not to water when it's windy. The wind can blow sprinklers off target and this speeds up the evaporation process.

22. Add organic matter and use efficient watering systems for shrubs, flower beds and lawns - Adding organic material to your soil will help increase its absorption and water retention. Areas that are already planted can be 'top-dressed' with compost or organic matter.

23. Don't run the hose while washing your car - Clean the car using a pail of soapy water. Use the hose only for rinsing. This simple practice can save as much as 150 gallons when washing a car. Use a spray nozzle when rinsing for more efficient use of water.

24. Use a broom, not a hose, to clean driveways and sidewalks.

25. Check for leaks in pipes, hoses, faucets, and couplings - Leaks outside the house may not seem as bad since they're not as visible, but they can be just as wasteful as leaks indoors. Check frequently to keep them drip-free. Use hose washers at spigots and hose connections to eliminate leaks.

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