



ANR-790-1.3.3

ALABAMA A & M AND AUBURN UNIVERSITIES

Conserving Water

Developing Water-Conserving Habits: A Checklist

There are many inexpensive ways to reduce water use in and around the home. Families who practice conservation can reduce the amount of water they use by about one-third.

The first step in understanding how to conserve water in your home is to know where water is used. Most people use 50 to 70 gallons of water indoors each day and as much as the same amount outdoors, depending on the season. Indoors, three-quarters of all the water is used in the bathroom. Outdoors, lawn

and garden watering and car washing account for most of the water used.

This checklist is designed to help you see how effectively you are using water and to alert you to ways of saving water. Some actions would need to be implemented only in emergency situations.

As you read this list, check the steps you have already taken to conserve water. Note what you still need to do to become a better manager of water resources. Concentrate on the big water uses first.

Test Yourself Using Your Water Conservation Checklist

Have Done	Will Do	
_____	_____	Plumbing System _____
_____	_____	Inspect the plumbing system to see that there are no leaks.
_____	_____	Turn off all water if you are going to be away on a vacation or trip. This prevents someone from turning on outside faucets while you are away.
_____	_____	Check to see how often your home water softening equipment regenerates and back-washes. It can use as much as 100 gallons of water each time it does this. You may want to cut down on the use of such equipment. Reserve softened water for kitchen use, bathing, and laundry. Use unsoftened water for all other purposes. This may require a bypass line.
_____	_____	Never use the toilet as a trash basket for facial tissues, etc. Each flush uses 5 to 7 gallons of water. Items carelessly thrown in could clog the system and add to sewage disposal problems.
_____	_____	Emergency Situations
_____	_____	When the toilet needs flushing, use gray water saved from cleaning, bathing, etc. Put the water in the toilet bowl, not the flush tank. If the system loses pressure, gray water could backsiphon and get into the system and contaminate the drinking water.
_____	_____	Laundry _____
_____	_____	Wait until you have a full load before washing, or use a lower water level setting. Save handwashing jobs and do several items at one time. Example: Wash a week's supply of hosiery rather than washing daily.
_____	_____	Use the permanent press cycle sparingly; it may include an additional fill with cold water that can use 10 to 20 gallons extra.
_____	_____	Check garments to make sure they need washing. Don't wash clothes more often than necessary.
_____	_____	Encourage children to change into play clothes after school so that school and play clothes can be worn several times.

ANR-790

Water Quality 1.3.3

Visit our Web site at: www.aces.edu

Emergency Situations

Use the gray water that siphons from your washing machine into a laundry tub or other container for cleaning, to flush the toilet, or to water plants. Use the gray water as soon as possible. Do not store longer than 24 hours.

Personal Care

Urge family members to take showers instead of tub baths. Showers—especially those fitted with flow restrictors or low-volume heads—usually use less water than a bath. Plug the tub during a shower and compare the water used with that for a bath.

Limit shower times to 2 minutes or less. If you prefer a tub bath, keep the water level low—no more than 5 inches of water.

Cut down on the number of showers taken. Replace some of them with sponge baths.

Limit the amount of shower water by the way you use the controls for the hot and cold water faucets.

Turn off the shower water while you apply soap to your body or while you lather your hair and massage your scalp.

Emergency Situations

Close the bathtub drain during a shower so the water stays in the tub. Use this water to flush the toilet or to water outdoor plants.

Food Preparation

Use a pan of water when peeling and cleaning vegetables and fruits rather than letting the sink tap run.

Limit your use of the garbage disposal. Save food scraps and run the disposal once per meal to conserve water. You can use the disposal even less by saving food scraps for a compost pile.

Use the smallest amount of water necessary to cook foods such as frozen vegetables and stews. You'll preserve nutrients as well as save water.

Use a tight-fitting lid on a pan to prevent water from boiling away and also to cook food faster, thereby using less energy.

Plan more one-dish meals in which vegetables are cooked or baked without adding water.

Use a tea kettle or covered pan to heat water to avoid the loss of water through evaporation.

Time foods while cooking to avoid overcooking and losing liquids through evaporation.

Select the proper size pans for cooking. Large pans require more water.

Use a pressure cooker to save water, energy, and time.

Keep a bottle of drinking water in your refrigerator to save running the tap to get cold water.

Save water leftover from cooking vegetables to use for soups and stews, for cooking raw or frozen vegetables, and for making gravy.

Use syrups and juices from canned goods to save water and make foods taste better. Use leftover fruit juices for drinking and making gelatin salads.

Emergency Situations

If a water shortage seems likely, store water in clean plastic or glass jugs with tight-fitting lids. Keep in the refrigerator and use sparingly.

Meal Service

Chill water in bottles in the refrigerator to avoid running excess water from the lines to get cold water for meals. Shake the bottle before serving to incorporate air into the water so that it doesn't go flat.

Encourage drinking water but put it on the table only if people ask for it.

Dishwashing

Cut down on the number of utensils used in food preparation and on the plates and glassware used with meals. This will help save dishwashing water.

Wash only full loads of dishes in the dishwasher. Energy-efficient dishwashers use about 9 to 13 gallons of water per cycle.

Avoid unnecessary rinsing of dishes that go into the dishwasher for immediate washing. Scrape if necessary.

When washing dishes by hand, use one pan of soapy water for washing and a second pan of hot water for rinsing. Rinsing in a pan requires less water than rinsing under a running faucet.

Household Cleaning

Wipe up small spills as they occur to avoid frequent mopping.

Regularly vacuum carpets and rugs so you won't need to shampoo them as often. There is less danger of permanent stains when you take care of spots as they occur.

Collect household cleaning chores. Do them together to save water. Clean the more lightly soiled surfaces first—mirrors, walls, woodwork, and then floors. Use door mats to keep dirt out of the house.

Use rinse water (gray water) saved from bathing or washing clothes to water outdoor plants. Do not use soapy water on indoor plants. It could damage them.

Water indoor plants only when needed. Too much water can damage plants.

Outside The Home

Washing your car can waste a lot of water. You may have to lower your standards and wash the car less often.

Use a bucket of warm, sudsy water to remove soil from the car. Hose down only as a final rinse.

Take advantage of a soft summer rain to wash your car. Get outside with soap and a sponge! Children will enjoy this.

If the water supply permits the use of an outdoor pool, cover the pool when it is not being used to prevent evaporation.

Clean the swimming pool filter often. Then you won't have to replace the water as often.

Use a broom, not the hose, to sweep the garage, sidewalks, and driveway.

List Water Conserving Practices You Plan To Use.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

References

Carroll, Jack. 1989. Water Conservation Checklist For The Home. MO524. Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service. Mississippi State University. Mississippi State, MS.

Dorman, Dale. Develop Water Saving Habits. Georgia Cooperative Extension Service. The University of Georgia. Athens, GA.

Hermanson, Ronald E. 1991. Home Water-Saving Methods. EBO732. Washington Cooperative Extension Service. Washington State University. Pullman, WA.

Peart, Virginia, and Kathy Walker. 1989. Using Water Wisely In Household Cleaning And Outdoor Uses. HE 3089. Florida Cooperative Extension Service. University of Florida. Gainesville, FL.



ANR-790-1.3.3

This publication, supported in part by a grant from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and the Tennessee Valley Authority, was prepared by James E. Hairston, *Extension Water Quality Scientist*, assisted by Leigh Stribling, *Technical Writer*.

For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

UPS, **New June 1995**, Water Quality 1.3.3