splash!

quick facts on...

50 Ways To Be Water Smart

HOW YOU CAN HELP SAVE FLORIDA'S LIMITED WATER SUPPLY

The South Florida Water Management District *is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.*

Our Mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems, and water supply.

NOTE:

Florida's lifestyle depends on a clean, ample supply of water. As you read through these 50 ways to save water, you'll notice that some are based on simple common sense, while others utilize new technology. It's important that we all do our part.

Saving Water Outdoors

1. Don't overwater your lawn – no more than once a week in the winter or twice a week in the summer. A good rain eliminates the need for watering for up to two weeks. Buy a rain gauge. Most of the year, lawns only need one inch of water per week.

2. Plant it smart. Xeriscape landscaping is a great way to design, install and maintain both your plants and irrigation system. It will save time, money and water.

3. Water lawns during the early morning hours when temperatures and wind speed are the lowest. This reduces evaporation and waste.

4. Position sprinklers so water lands on the lawn and shrubs and not on paved areas.

5. Install irrigation devices that are the most water efficient for each use. Micro and drip irrigation and soaker hoses are examples of efficient devices.

6. Check sprinkler systems and timing devices regularly to be sure they operate properly. Florida law now requires that "anyone who purchases and installs an automatic lawn sprinkler system MUST install a rain sensor device or switch which will override the irrigation cycle when adequate rainfall has occurred."

7. Raise the lawn mower blade to at least three inches, or to its highest level. A higher cut encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system and holds soil moisture.

8. Avoid over fertilizing your lawn. Applying fertilizer increases the need for water. Apply fertilizers which contain slow-release, water-insoluble forms of nitrogen.

9. Use mulch to retain moisture in the soil. (Help preserve native cypress forests by selecting other types of mulch such as treated melaleuca.) Mulch also helps control weeds that compete with landscape plants for water.

10. Plant native and/or drought-tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs and trees. Once established, they do not need water as frequently and usually will survive a dry period without watering. They also require less fertilizer or herbicides. Group plants together based on similar water needs.

11. Use a broom or blower instead of a hose to clean leaves and other debris from your driveway or sidewalk.

12. Use a shut-off nozzle on your hose which can be adjusted down to a fine spray, so that water flows only as needed. When finished, turn it off at the faucet instead of at the nozzle, to avoid leaks. Check hose connectors to make sure plastic or rubber washers are in place. Washers prevent leaks.

13. Do not leave sprinklers or hoses unattended. A garden hose can pour out 600 gallons or more in only a few hours. Use a bell timer to remind yourself to turn sprinklers off.

14. Avoid purchasing recreational water toys which require a constant stream of water.

15. Consider using a commercial car wash that recycles water. If you wash your own car, park on the grass and use a hose with an automatic shut-off nozzle.

Florida's Water

It's Worth Saving

16. Avoid installing ornamental water features (such as fountains) unless they use recycled water.

17. If you have a swimming pool, consider a new water-saving pool filter. A single backflushing with a traditional filter uses 180 to 250 gallons of water.

In Your Home

18. Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it. Use it to water your indoor plants or garden.

19. Make sure your home is leak-free. Check your water meter when you are certain that no water is being used. If the meter reading changes, you have a leak!

20. Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. One drop per second wastes 2,700 gallons of water per year!

21. Retrofit all household faucets by installing aerators with flow restrictors.

22. Check for toilet leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If you have a leak, the color will appear in the bowl within 30 minutes. (Flush immediately to avoid stains.)

23. If the toilet handle frequently sticks in the flush position, letting water run constantly, replace or adjust it.

24. Install a toilet displacement device to cut down on the amount of water needed for each flush. (Don't use a brick! There are devices available at most hardware and home centers.) Be sure installation does not interfere with the operating parts. Consider low-volume toilets which use less than half the water of older models. NOTE: In many areas, low-volume units are required by law.

25. Take shorter showers. Replace your showerhead with an ultra-low-flow version.

26. Place a bucket in the shower to catch excess water to water plants.

27. In the shower, turn water on to get wet; turn off to lather up; then turn the water back on to rinse off. Repeat when washing your hair.

28. Operate automatic dishwashers and clothes washers only when they are fully loaded or set the water level for the size of load you are using.

29. When hand washing dishes, save water by filling two containers – one with soapy water, one with rinse water containing a small amount of chlorine bleach.

30. Store drinking water in the refrigerator. Don't let the tap run while you are waiting for water to cool.

31. Do not use running water to thaw meat or other frozen foods. Defrost food overnight in the refrigerator, or use the defrost setting on your microwave.

32. Kitchen sink disposals require lots of water to operate properly. Start a compost pile as an alternate method of disposing of food waste.

33. Do not waste water waiting for it to get hot. Capture it for other uses such as plant watering or heat it on the stove or in a microwave.

34. Consider installing an instant hot water heater on your sink and insulating your water pipes.

35. Think twice about installing a water-to-air heat pump or air-conditioning system. Newer air-to-air models are just as efficient and do not waste water.

36. Don't let water run while brushing your teeth, washing your face or shaving.

37. Install water softening systems only when necessary. Turn softeners off while on vacation.

38. If you have a well at home, check your pump periodically. If the pump kicks on and off while water is not being used, you have a leak.

39. Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Dispose of tissues, insects and other similar waste in the trash rather than the toilet.

General Water Saving Tips

40. Follow water conservation guidelines and ordinances in your community. Even if your water comes from a private well – you are expected to comply.

41. Report water losses (broken pipes, open hydrants, errant sprinklers, abandoned free-flowing wells, etc.) to the property owner, local authorities or your water management district.

42. Promote water conservation in community newsletters, on bulletin boards and by example. Encourage your friends, neighbors and co-workers to "be water smart."

43. Patronize businesses which practice water conservation, such as restaurants that only serve water upon request.

44. Encourage your employer to promote water conservation in the workplace.

45. Encourage your school system and local government to help develop and promote a water conservation ethic.

46. Support projects that will lead to an increased use of reclaimed waste water for irrigation and other uses.

47. Support efforts that promote water conservation among tourists.

48. Conserve water because it is the right thing to do – even when someone else is footing the bill, such as when you are staying at a hotel.

49. Participate in public water conservation meetings conducted by your local government, utility or water management district.

50. Try to do one thing each day that will result in saving water. Every drop counts!

– FOR MORE WATER CONSERVATION INFORMATION & MATERIALS –
Please contact the SFWMD at 1-800-662-8876 or visit us on the Web at www.sfwmd.gov.

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South Florida Water Management District
3301 Gun Club Road
West Palm Beach, Florida 33406
561-686-8800 • FL WATS 800-432-2045
www.sfwmd.gov

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 24680
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

SERVICE CENTERS

Big Cypress Basin
941-597-1505
Broward
954-713-3200 or 877-350-3897
Florida Keys
305-853-3219 or 800-464-5067
Fort Myers
941-338-2929 or 800-248-1201
Martin/St. Lucie
561-223-2600 or 800-250-4100
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305-377-7274 or 800-250-4300
Okeechobee
863-462-5260 or 800-250-4200
Orlando
407-858-6100 or 800-250-4250
Palm Beach
561-682-6792 or 800-432-2045 ext. 6792