

Common Ways to Cut Your Water Use

By Kyle Jones

Californians have begun to respond to persistent drought by taking individual actions that have helped to reduce overall water demand. Here in Sacramento, for instance, we have managed to lower our water usage from a city high of 307 gallons a day in 1980 to 179 gallons a day in 2014, the lowest level of water usage in 100 years.



Despite these improvements, Californians still can do much more to help conserve water in the home. Some Australian cities managed to reduce water use per person to just 39 gallons a day during the 1990s drought.

In the home, greater water conservation can be achieved through a combination of changing practices and switching to high-efficiency appliances. Changing practices is cheap and will usually even save money.

In the kitchen, make sure to run a full load in the dishwasher, and cut back on pre-rinsing dishes as necessary. For laundry, run full loads and use cold water to save water, energy, and the colors in your clothes.

In the bathroom, turn off the faucet when brushing teeth, washing hands, washing hair in the shower, or while shaving. Teach water saving ideas to children to decrease use and help make water conservation a way of life for years to come.

It costs more upfront to switch to high-efficiency appliances, but they, too, will ultimately save you money on your water bill. Installing high-efficiency clothes washers and dishwashers, and low-flow sinks, showers, and toilets, will reduce overall consumption

Outdoor water use also presents lots of opportunities to conserve. Sprinkler systems can be engineered to save water by timing them to deliver water in the early morning or late evening when temperatures are cooler. Sprinklers should be maintained to prevent them from watering the house and sidewalk in addition to the lawn. Adjust sprinkler settings to determine how much water your lawn actually needs and prevent overwatering. More efficient drip irrigation systems can be installed for trees and shrubbery.

Better yet, consider planting more drought-resistant trees and plants, and think about whether you actually need a lawn. Many local governments are offering rebates to convert lawns into more natural, drought-resistant landscaping.

These represent a small sample of the many ways Californians have begun to cut back our overall water use. For more ideas, look to www.saveourwater.com and www.bewaterwise.com.

As Australia has shown us, collective efforts can make each precious drop of water go that much farther.