

Tips on Saving Water & Reducing Your Water Bill

1. Why do we need to conserve water?

A. Reducing water use saves you money. Every reduction in water use saves you money – both in your water and sewer bill. By implementing several simple water conservation steps, households and businesses can easily reduce their annual water and sewer bills by 40%.

B. Saving water saves energy. The process of taking water from Lake Winnebago and into your faucet consumes energy, including the pumping of the water from the lake, the treatment of the water, the pumping from the treatment facility to your faucet, and often the heating of the water. In addition, energy is used to pump and treat the wastewater after your use. These hidden costs contribute to expense of the water, as well as the negative impact on our local environment.



C. Water is a limited resource. Increased human demand can greatly reduce fresh water supplies, which also contributes to the destruction of fresh water habitats for local wildlife and migrating waterfowl. In Oshkosh, we are fortunate to reside on the shores of Lake Winnebago and near the Great Lakes. As communities throughout the Midwest search for reliable water sources, it becomes increasingly important that we protect and conserve our waters.

2. How do we conserve water?

A. Water Conservation In the House:

1. Time your shower to keep it under 5 minutes. You'll save 6-9 gallons of water per minute. A family of 4 that cuts out 4 minutes per day per person saves 3600 gallons of water in 30 days.
2. Don't use the toilet as an ashtray or wastebasket. Every time you flush a cigarette butt, facial tissue or other small bit of trash, four to six gallons of water is wasted. If your family does this only 5 times per day for 30 days, you are wasting 750 gallons of water.

3. Turn off the water while you brush your teeth and save 4 gallons a minute. That's 200 gallons a week for a family of four that brushes twice a day.
4. 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.
5. Fix any water leaks or toilet issues immediately. Ignoring a water leak issue can quickly result in the loss of thousands of gallons of water.
6. Run your washing machine and dishwasher only when they are full and you could save a thousand gallons a month.
7. Plug the bathtub before turning the water on, then adjust the temperature as the tub fills up. This can save a few gallons for each bath. A family with several little kids can easily save several hundred gallons every year.
8. Designate one glass for your drinking water each day. This will cut down on the number of times you run your dishwasher or the time and water use needed to wash extra glasses.
9. Teach your children to turn the faucets off tightly after each use.
10. Cook food in as little water as possible. This will also retain more of the nutrients
11. Turn off the water while you shave and you can save more than 100 gallons a week per person.
12. If you accidentally drop ice cubes when filling your glass from the freezer, don't throw them in the sink. Drop them in a house plant or pet water instead.
13. Recycle dehumidifier condensate to water indoor or outdoor plants
14. Chill drinking water in the refrigerator instead of running the faucet until the water is cold, or use ice cubes.
15. Defrost food in the refrigerator, not in a pan of water on the counter or in the sink. Besides saving water, it's less likely to breed bacteria.
16. When installing a new toilet, consider installing low-flow. A low-flow toilet may use as little as 1.5 gallons of water per flush – a water savings of 2-4 gallons per flush. Over an average year, the low-flow toilet will reduce your total water use by 30-40%.
17. Install low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators. These simple and low-cost water conservation steps can pay for themselves in 3-4 months. With the reduced water flow, the normal water consumption is reduced by as much as 50%, and the energy cost from heating the water are also reduced by as much as 50%.



B. Water Conservation In Your Yard:

1. Water during cooler parts of the day, such as early morning or early dusk. Avoid watering when it is windy. This greatly reduces the loss of water to evaporation. Generally, watering in the morning is better for your plants as it helps reduce the likelihood of fungus growth.
2. Plant native plants. Native plants are more adapted to the weather patterns in the local region, and are generally drought tolerant due to their development of deep root systems. Native plants require far less manual watering. UW Extension has developed a handout on native plants and native plant sources available online at <http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/pdf/home.lonative.pdf>
3. Collect and use Rain Water for your lawn and garden. More information on this free source of water, including rain barrel installation, is available at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/runoff/rg/links.htm#links>
4. Add compost to soil to retain water. Add a layer of mulch to your garden bed to help retain moisture.
5. Repair any leaks in your water hose system. Leaky hoses can waste significant quantities of water with no benefits.
6. Leave your grass clippings on your lawn. This provides free moisture and nutrients. Mow only when your grass is high, and mow less often. This will help develop strong grass root systems, and reduce the need for any fertilizer applications.
7. Pay attention to the weather. One inch of watering per week is all your yard needs, and this includes the rainfall. Decrease watering time during cool or humid conditions. If it's rained moderately that week you won't need to water!
8. Too much water can hurt plants - over-watering creates shallow roots, making plants more vulnerable to disease and pests, as well as drought.
9. Porous paving materials such as brick, decomposed granite, or gravel used in patios and walkways help keep water in the garden rather than in the gutter.
10. Water your lawn infrequently but deeply – about one inch per week. Decrease watering when the weather is humid or the temperatures have cooled down for several days. A mild rain will adequately water your lawn for about a week, eliminating the need for supplemental watering.
11. Clean your sidewalks, porch, and driveways with a broom and/or a rag. Do not use the hose, wasting large amounts of water.
12. Wash your vehicles at facilities that recycle their water. Washing vehicles at home can cause unintended pollution runoff and water waste.



3. Additional Information

For additional ideas on water conservation, visit:

- <http://www.wateruseitwisely.com/>
- <http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/pdf/home.lawnwat.pdf>

For backyard conservation ideas, visit the US Natural Resource Conservation Service guide at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/FEATURE/backyard/>

How much water do you use at home? Check out the WATER USE CALULATOR AT: <http://www.waterbudgets.com/ConserVision/CUWCC/DataInput.htm>

Water Conservation handout developed by Justin Mitchell, Sustainable Oshkosh Board member, February 2009. Water Tower photo and Water glass photo by Justin Mitchell. Flower bee photo by Mandy Mitchell.