

A beginner's guide to planting a 'low-water' garden

Each spring and summer, millions of Canadians head to their local greenhouses for plants and flowers. And as part of a growing trend to conserve water, more of them will be opting for low-water plants. Low-water gardening isn't new. But with an increased focus on water preservation, and with some communities enforcing summer watering restrictions, the concept is gaining in popularity.

Here's a quick guide to get you started:

Step 1: Create a plan

- Map out a plan for your yard. Decide on plant placement, with an eye toward colour combinations and spacing.
- Put taller plants in the middle, surrounded by shorter ones.
- Get ideas online or from your local nursery.

Step 2: Prepare the soil

- Assess the soil. If it's hard, sandy or mostly clay, you'll need to bring it up to snuff.
- Turn the soil with a shovel or rototiller. Add manure, compost and/or peat moss. Or

bring a soil sample to a gardening centre and they'll tell you what's missing.

- Mix the materials in a wheelbarrow and distribute.
- Work into the ground. Level with a rake.

Step 3: Buy your plants

- Group plants according to watering needs, with shade-tolerant species in shady areas and drought-tolerant species in sunny spots.
- Your local nursery experts can help with plant selection.
- Set the plants in place. Remove each from its pot, dig a hole and plant in the ground.

Step 4: Watering

- Use a soaker hose to get water to the root of plant.
 - Water early in the day.
 - A new garden needs frequent watering until roots are established.
 - Use mulch to help prevent evaporation.
 - Once your garden is mature, you can reduce watering to as little as once every two weeks.
- Low-water gardening can enhance the beauty of your surroundings while helping

save on your water bill. To learn more about protecting water, visit the RBC Blue Water Project at www.rbc.com/bluewater.

To celebrate our most pre-

cious resource, RBC has launched Join the Wave – an online campaign to create a global wave of support for water protection. To participate, simply upload your photo and

a message about water to our Facebook stadium at www.facebook.com/rbcbluewaterproject.

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Ten ways to cut your water bill this summer

In case you hadn't noticed, the cost of living is on the rise. From the grocery cart to your gas tank and everywhere in between, prices for day-to-day goods are near record highs. While you can't do much about the price of wheat or crude oil, there's one area of your home where a few quick fixes can translate into real savings: your water bill.

Follow these 10 tips and you could shave as much as 20 per cent off your annual water bill:

1. Make sure your dishwasher and washing machine are fully loaded before pressing 'start'. By running fewer and fuller washes, you'll use less water and energy.
2. If you don't already have one, install a low-flow showerhead.
3. Install a low-flow toilet. Or place a pop bottle filled with sand or water in your toilet

tank. You'll use less water every time you flush.

4. Stop washing your car at home. Many people think it saves water but it doesn't. Most car washes have water recycling systems and cost just a few dollars per visit.

5. Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth or shaving.

6. Check for (and fix) leaky taps and faucets. Even a small leak can waste thousands of litres of water per year.

7. Attach a rain barrel to your downspout to collect water for plants, flowers, etc.

8. Avoid using your toilet as a garbage can. Flushing a cigarette butt, wad of gum or a tis-

sue can use as much as 14 litres of water (depending on the age of your toilet).

9. Keep a jug of water in the fridge to avoid having to run water from the tap until it's cold.

10. Replace your old dishwasher or washing machine with a model that's more water and energy efficient.

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