

Home & Garden

Tips for a Green Lawn and a Greener Wallet

When spring arrives, it's time to get your yard in shape. Everyone wants a lush, green lawn, but beware of the hidden expense of water waste. If you follow a few simple steps for water conservation inside and outside your home, you'll end up with that great-looking yard without the big expense when the water bills come.

Money Down the Drain

Every year, the average American family wastes around 32,000 gallons of water — that's the volume of a medium-sized swimming pool. Most of that waste occurs in the bathroom, sometimes because we leave the water running without thinking (do we really need to let it run the whole time while we're brushing our teeth?). Other times, the water

and money is draining away without us even knowing it.

The chief culprits are:

- running toilets
- inefficient fixtures
- leaking plumbing
- excessive lawn-watering

Hosin' Around the Yard

It takes 660 gallons to water a typical 1,000 square-foot lawn with 1 inch of water — the same amount of water you use inside your house in a week. It's easy to cut this in half and save money by remembering these basics:

- Use the right equipment. While most sprinklers do a pretty good job, there is a difference in hose nozzles. When you're washing the car or spraying your garden, a pistol-type nozzle is best because you can adjust the flow rate or stop it completely to answer the phone or chat with a neighbor.
- Set a schedule. Your lawn doesn't need dousing every day. Watering every other day is fine, especially if you do it in the early morning or evening when the sun won't evaporate the water before it can soak in.
- Maximize water usage. If you have a smaller lawn and more plants, you should use irrigation hoses. These target smaller amounts of water right at the root level of your garden. Mulching around trees and shrubs also will maximize your water usage by reducing the amount of water lost through evaporation. Additionally, "recycling" rainwater from roof downspouts for watering your garden will help you cut back.

Go With the Flow

Indoors, you can start saving water immediately by tackling one of the biggest water-wasters first — your toilet. If your old one has had it, buy a new low-flow model. These

toilets use about 1.5 gallons per flush, as opposed to the standard version that sinks 4 gallons per use. Otherwise, try these methods for conserving water and saving money in the bathroom:

- Install a toilet dam to reduce the holding capacity of your tank and use less water per flush. No need for a plumber or fancy contraption from the hardware store. Just use an old 1/2-gallon plastic soda bottle. Fill it with water and drop it in the tank, but be sure to leave at least 3 gallons of water, or you might be plunging until next spring.
- Leaks and drips from your toilet add up. A running toilet can waste up to 100 gallons a day, and jiggling the handle only is a short-term fix. Get the right replacement parts (usually just a new flange) and do the job in less than 10 minutes.
- Some leaks from the tank to the bowl are slower and quieter. Here's a tip on how to check for slow leaks: squeeze a couple drops of food coloring into the tank, then wait. If color appears in the bowl, you're sitting on a problem.
- Just like it's a good idea to inspect your car's belts and hoses, you occasionally should check all the plumbing connections. If you don't have plumbing tools, large-jawed VISE-GRIP® locking pliers let you get around all the various-sized pipes and couplings, and will make freeing frozen or rusted bolts easier. Be sure to check basins, sinks and all pipe connections in the basement.

Do you have a "grubby" lawn?

What are grubs? They are the larvae of an insect, usually beetles such as June bugs & Japanese beetles. White grubs have three pairs of small legs near the head, and are white with brown heads and a dark area near the rear of the abdomen.

The first sign of grubs on a lawn can be damage caused by animals that tear up the turf to dine on the grub, or the browning out of the lawn in patches.

Take a spade and cut a square foot piece of sod two to three inches deep too check the roots for damage and then sift through the soil for the larvae.

There are a number of controls the home owner can use to rid themselves of these pests, but in all cases it is the timing of the application that is most important. Biological controls (nematodes) can be applied when the soil temperature reaches 60 F. This control is the safest and most effective method of dealing with lawn grubs. Should you choose a chemical control it should be applied during the grubs feeding cycle in July. Whether you have grubs or not, I cannot stress enough the importance of regular watering to reduce the stresses on the lawn which invite grubs.

Sharon Crump, Garden Centre Manager, Country Depot.

Tender Blossoms

Roses are red, violets are blue, gardening is a hobby people any age can do. Whether you are 6 years old or 60 years old, you need not be an experienced "gardener" to enjoy the thrill that growing flowers, vegetables, shrubs or trees brings. A simple sprinkle of water on a single flower, some sunlight, and a lot of love and care is all you need to make a garden grow.

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