

WATER CONSERVATION
FOR TEXAS GARDEN CLUB
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Water conservation in Texas requires each region to use conservation techniques that are area-specific. From the wetlands to the “dry-lands”, Texas Garden Clubs can help each other by doing not only what is best for their area, but techniques that will also benefit surrounding regions.

About half of Texas’ water comes from aquifers, underground areas of gravel and sand that hold water. The other half comes from rivers, and reservoirs, ponds or lakes created by building a dam on a river. Rivers in Texas flow downhill to the Gulf of Mexico. Fun fact: It takes more than 37 days for one drop of water to travel the entire length of the Rio Grande.

So, for dry regions, water conservation may be more critical, but it is also important for the wet regions to use water responsibly. From lawn and garden watering to household usage there are many simple things we can all do to conserve this precious resource. Following are ways you can conserve water, inside the home and out:

CONSERVING WATER OUTDOORS

Outdoor water use can account for 50-80% of home water use in the summer. Many water utilities charge higher rates during the summer to try to curb water usage and/or make up for cost of water loss and treatment.

1. Water your lawn early in the morning or late in the evening so the sun doesn’t evaporate it before it reaches the lawn.
2. Check your sprinklers to be sure the water is going where needed, not on the concrete, etc. Watering systems can help by allowing you to reduce watering time in areas that need less water. Check with your local supplier for water-saving sprinkler heads, too.
3. Use a blower or broom and not water to clean driveways or streets.
4. Use a bucket and hose with shut-off nozzle to wash cars, etc.

WATER-WISE LANDSCAPE

1. Use 1-3 inches of mulch in beds and around young trees.
2. Weed as needed because weeds rob plants of valuable water.
3. Fertilize in spring and fall to help develop good root systems to keep grass more drought tolerant.
4. Keep grass 3 inches tall during the summer to hold moisture better and encourage deep root growth—taller stresses the grass.

5. Plant water-efficient, well-adapted and/or native plants and grasses. Check with your County Agri-Life Extension Agent or city or water-supplier for recommendations.
6. Plant drought-tolerant groundcover instead of grass in areas that are small or sloping. Limit turf areas to those needed for practical uses.
7. Install rain barrels to use to water your plants. Some local governmental entities give rebates.

CONSERVING WATER INDOORS

Per capita water use in Texas averages 164 gallons per person per day. By using water-saving measures, you not only save money, but you protect water resources of both current and future Texans.

1. Toilets are by far the main source of water use in the home. State and federal law requires toilets must not exceed 1.6 gallons per flush. Many local utilities offer rebates to replace old toilets with high-efficiency toilets.
2. A leaky toilet can waste 200 gallons of water per day, so replace worn parts as needed.
3. Don't use the toilet as a trash can for tissues, etc.
4. A 15-minute shower can use about 45 gallons of water, so shortening by 5 minutes can save 15 gallons of water. Installing a water-efficient showerhead is one of the single-most effective water-saving steps you can take.
5. A full bathtub can require up to 70 gallons of water—enjoy sparingly!
6. Turning off your faucet when you brush your teeth can save 3 ½ gallons.
7. Washing machines are also one of the highest users of water, so use proper water setting for load size. Best to wash only full loads, and use shortest wash cycle.
8. Use a basin or stopper the sink to wash produce instead of letting the water run.
9. Limit the use of garbage disposals as they require a lot of water to operate properly.

So, let's conserve water for the future, starting now!