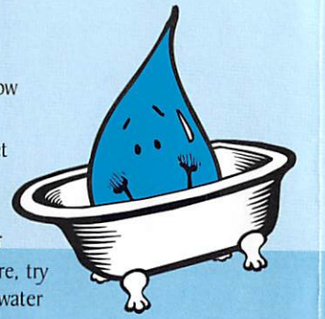
Watching Water Wasters in the Kitchen and Bathroom

The Toilet

- Check for toilet leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the bowl within 30 minutes. Check the toilet for worn out, corroded, or bent parts. Consider purchasing LowFlow toilets that can reduce indoor water use by 20%.
- Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Dispose of tissues, insects and other similar waste in the trash rather than the toilet.

The Shower/Bath



- Replace your showerhead with an ultra low-flow version, saving up to 2.5 gallons per minute.
- Take shorter showers. Try a "Navy" shower: get wet, turn off the water, soap and scrub, then turn the water on to rinse.
- In the shower, instead of increasing the hot or cold water flow to adjust the water temperature, try decreasing the flow to achieve a comfortable water temperature.
- Use the minimum amount of water needed for a bath by closing the drain first and filling the tub only 1/3 full. The initial burst of cold water can be warmed by adding hot water later.
- Don't let the water run while shaving, washing your face, or brushing your teeth.

The Kitchen

- Minimize the use of kitchen sink disposals; they require a lot of water to operate properly. Start a compost pile as an alternate method of disposing of food waste.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator rather than letting the tap run to get a cool glass of water.
- Do not use running water to thaw meat or other frozen foods. Defrost them overnight in the refrigerator.

Washing Dishes

- When washing dishes by hand, fill one sink or basin with soapy water. Quickly rinse under a slow stream of water from the faucet. Use the dirty water to run your sink disposal if necessary.
- Fully load automatic dishwashers; they use the same amount of water no matter how much is in them.
- Buy dishwashers with water and energy saving options.

Other Water Wasters in Your Home

Appliances

- Unlike your dishwasher, the amount of water your washing machine uses is adjustable; adjust according to the load size.
- Look for water saving washing machines and buy them. Horizontal loading machines use less water than top-loading machines.
- Install a hot water recirculation device. By recirculating water that would otherwise go down the drain, you can save 2-3 gallons of water for each shower taken or 16,500 gallons a year per household. This may mean average annual savings of $50 on your water bill and $40 on your energy bill.
- Never install a water-to-air heat pump or air-conditioning system. Air-to-air models are just as efficient and do not waste water.
- Install water-softening systems only when necessary. Save water and salt by running the minimum amount of regenerations necessary to maintain water softness. Turn softeners off while on vacation.

Divert from the Drain

- Never put water down the drain when there may be another use for it such as watering a plant or garden, or cleaning.
- Reuse fish tank water on your household plants-it makes nice fertilizer too.

Maintenance

- Verify that your home is leak free, because many homes have hidden water leaks. Read your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, there is a leak.
- Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. If your faucet is dripping at the rate of one drop per second, you can expect to waste 2,700 gallons per year.
- Retrofit all wasteful household faucets by installing aerators with flow restrictors.
- Insulate your water pipes. You'll get hot water faster and avoid wasting water.

- Check your pump. If you have a well at your home, listen to see if the pump turns on and off while the water is not in use. If it does, you have a leak.

Outdoor Water Wasters to Watch

Watering the Lawn

- Don't over-water your lawn. As a general rule, lawns only need watering every 5 to 7 days in the summer. A hearty rain eliminates the need for watering for as long as two weeks.
- Water lawns during early morning hours when temperatures and wind speed are the lowest. This reduces losses from evaporation.
- Don't water your street, driveway or sidewalk. Position your sprinklers so that your water lands on the lawn and shrubs and not the paved areas.
- Install sprinklers that are the most water-efficient for each use such as micro and drip irrigation and soaker hoses.
- Regularly check sprinkler systems and timing devices to be sure they are operating properly. Teach your family how to shut off automatic systems so they can turn them off when storms are approaching.
- Do not leave sprinklers or hoses unattended. Your garden hose can pour out 600 gallons or more in only a few hours. Use a kitchen timer to remind yourself to turn the water off.

Lawn Care

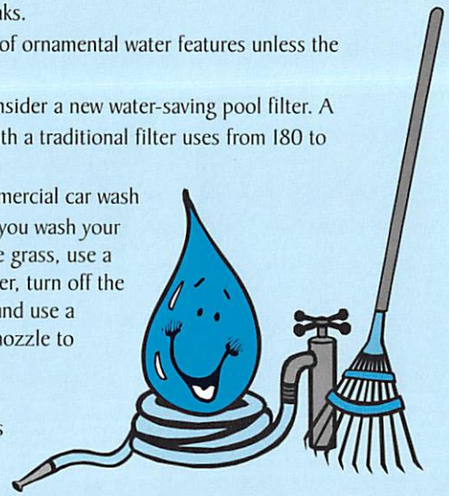
- Raise your lawn mower blade to at least three inches. A lawn cut higher encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system and holds soil moisture better than closely-clipped lawns.
- Avoid overfertilizing your lawn. The application of fertilizers increases the need for water and is a source of water pollution.

Landscaping

- Mulch to retain moisture in the soil. Mulching also helps to control weeds that compete with plants for water.
- Plant native and/or drought-tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs and trees. Check with your local nursery for advice. Group plants together based on similar water needs.
- Minimize the grass areas in your yard because less grass means less water.
- Buy a rain gauge to determine how much rain or irrigation your yard has received.

Other Outdoor Water Wasters To Watch

- Do not hose down your driveway or sidewalk; use a broom instead and save hundreds of gallons of drinkable water.
- Check all hoses, connectors and spigots regularly. Replace or add washers if you find leaks.
- Avoid the installation of ornamental water features unless the water is recycled.
- If you have a pool, consider a new water-saving pool filter. A single backflushing with a traditional filter uses from 180 to 250 gallons of water.
- Consider using a commercial car wash that recycles water. If you wash your own car, park it on the grass, use a bucket with soapy water, turn off the water while soaping, and use a hose with a pressure nozzle to decrease rinsing time.
- Avoid purchasing recreational water toys that require a constant stream of water.



At Work and Around Town

Be Active

- Encourage your employer to promote water conservation at the workplace. Suggest that water conservation tips be put in the employee orientation manual and training program.

- Support projects that will lead to an increased use of reclaimed wastewater for irrigation and other uses.
- Promote water conservation in community newsletters, on bulletin boards and by example.
- Patronize businesses that practice and promote water conservation.
- Report all significant water losses (broken pipes, open hydrants, misdirected sprinklers, abandoned or free-flowing wells, etc.) to the property owner, local authorities or your water management district.
- Encourage your school system and local government to promote a water conservation ethic among school children and adults.

You're in Control

- Try to do one thing each day to save water. Don't worry if the savings are minimal. Every drop counts. And every person can make a difference.
- Be aware of and follow all water conservation and water shortage rules and restrictions that may be in effect in your area.
- Make sure your children are aware of the need to conserve water.

For more information on water efficiency and conservation, contact the National Small Flows Clearinghouse at (800) 624-8301 or www.nsfc.wvu.edu

To take a Water Awareness Test to see how you measure up, log-on to www.getwise.org/wwise/test.html

For more information or to get additional copies contact:
Department of Community Affairs
Office of Environmental Management
60 Executive Park South
Atlanta, GA 30329
(404) 679-4940
www.dca.state.ga.us

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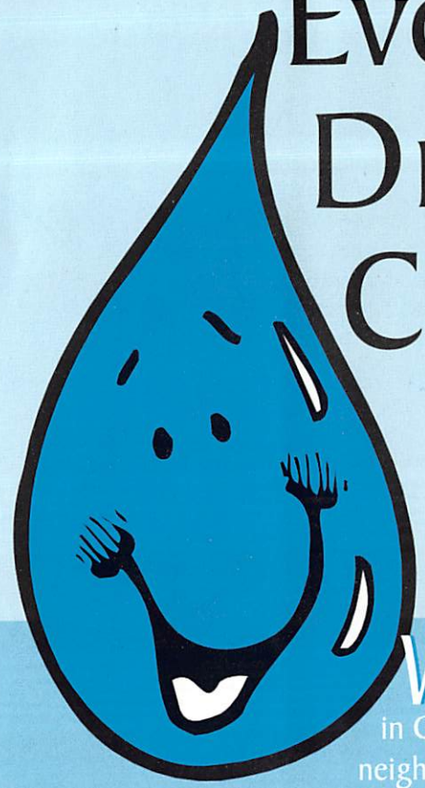
Every Drop Counts



Water is a precious resource in Georgia and its neighboring states. Growing populations and ongoing drought are squeezing our water resources dry, causing natural habitat degradation and impacting our everyday use of water. We have no choice but to pay more attention to how we are using water, and how we may be wasting it. We must bridge the gap between our understanding of how important water is to our survival and what we can do to ensure that we have an adequate supply of clean water for years to come. Inside is a list of many simple ways we can take action and conserve water, both inside and outside our homes.