

Water, Water

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“Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink”, from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Coleridge, 1798), that haunting tale, may soon be true for us. Many are pointing out that the next great wars (after we finish our oil wars) will be over water. Over 50 countries are expected to experience severe drought in coming years. The United States is facing one of the worst droughts on records. Regions such as the southeast and southwest are already in severe crises for water. Who knows how soon we will be in such a predicament?

You may also have noticed how little rain and snow we have gotten in recent years as global warming wrecks havoc on us all. While there is plenty of water on earth, there is a rapidly diminishing amount of drinkable water. Also, to make our water clean takes tremendous amount of energy, so the less we waste, the less we contribute to global warming.

There are numerous ways for you to save water at home. Below are just a few. Most are free or very inexpensive. Remember, the more water you save, the more you are helping the planet and our future and the money saving is a nice boost too.

In the laundry: When you buy a washing machine, get a front end loader which uses much less water than a top loader. Comparison shopping is not just about final costs but also about the energy the machine uses as well as the amount of water it uses. Use the delicate or shorter cycles for most washes, the normal or heavy duty is almost always overkill.

In the shower: Make sure you have a low-flow shower head on your shower. You can get them on-line or in a good hardware store for between \$10 and \$100 or more. There is no need to get the expensive kind; they won't necessarily save you any more water. Keep your showers short and always shower rather than take a bath (and skip the water and electricity wasting hot tubs too).

In the bathroom: Open up the toilet tank and gently put in a brick or a plastic bottle or two filled with water. This displaces the water in the tank giving you a lower flush toilet without the expense of buying one. Just make sure what you put in the tank does not bump into the mechanisms in the tank. Also, you don't have to flush with every use, you know, “if its yellow let it mellow...” When you do buy a new toilet, make sure to get a low-flush one.

In the garden: Save water and a ton of work but giving up on trying having the perfect lawn. A lawn is nothing more than a mono-crop that requires intensive maintenance and a great deal of water and is useless to the eco-system. Cut the grass high to naturally conserve water, let native plants take over as much of the lawn as possible, plant native plants where

ever you can. Native plants use less water than non-natives and are more helpful for local critters. When you water your garden, don't use a sprinkler. Use a hose with a gentle spray and point it directly at the base of the plants you want to water. If you want, you can invest in a soaker hose. You might even want to look into rain barrels for collecting rain water. Just Google "rain barrel" for building your own or for purchasing one. Also, using compost helps retain moisture in the soil so you will need to water less often. When you do use a hose, use it early in the day or after the sun has begun to come down. You don't want the sun to evaporate the water you are trying to use on the garden.

In the kitchen: Almost everyone these days uses a dishwasher but remember that this is a luxury item not a necessity. If you do use a dishwasher and if your machine allows, use it with the fewest cycles possible and always on the energy saving mode. Consider washing by hand. You will save great amounts of water and electricity this way as long as you do not keep the water running while you wash. You can donate your dishwasher to a non-profit or sell it used and then use the empty spot in the kitchen for your own recycling center or storage area. Also, let your left over water from steamed veggies cool off and use it to water indoor or outdoor plants.

Washing your car at home or at the carwash is up for grabs, but if you wash at home, you can be sure you will use less water, if you are careful and if don't let your hose drip. There are waterless car washes available, they come in a bottle and you use it like other cleaners. I have used them in the past with good results. Again, a simple Google search will find you a good, chemical free one.

As with all of our natural resources, we know how endangered they are. You can do your share, shopping at the coop and shopping local makes a big difference but please do everything you can at home too. Take a minute also to join some environmental groups 'cause none of us can do it alone.

Rain barrels: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGFDlkjOdaM>

Water saving tips: <http://www.americanwater.com/49ways.htm>

Politics of water: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/natres/waterindex.htm>