

BASICS

Did you know that...?

- The average U.S. household uses 350 gallons of water per day, according to the American Water Works Association.
- landscape irrigation accounts for almost half of residential water use?
- A single lawn sprinkler spraying five gallons per minute uses 50% more water in just one hour than a combination of ten toilet flushes, two 5-minute showers, two dishwasher loads, and a full load of clothes!
- homeowners can reduce their indoor-water use by about 30 percent by installing more efficient water fixtures and regularly checking for leaks.



For further information:

- **McHenry County Water Resource Department:** <http://www.co.mchenry.il.us/common/countyDpt/WaterRes/publications.asp>
- **Water-supply Situation in Illinois:** <http://www.growingsensibly.org/cmapdfs/TroubledWaters.pdf>
- **Homeowners:** <http://nirpc.org/environment/pdf/Homeowners.pdf>
- **Soil-test Labs in Illinois:** <http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/soiltest/>



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McHenry County Government

Water Resources



WATER CONSERVATION

WATER

To many, water seems so common that we scarcely make note of it—we waste it, we pollute it, we let it run down the drain, flushing it away. In reality water is not common at all—it is absolutely unique! Currently the only place in the universe where we know that liquid water can exist is on Earth. Water is THE source of living,

What is groundwater?

Groundwater is the most important drinking water resource—in McHenry County it's the only one. It is stored in aquifers under the ground. Aquifers are connected with streams, lakes and wetlands. If the Aquifers lose water, these natural wetlands, lakes and streams lose water too.

Why Conserve ?

With an expected population growth from 260,077 in 2000 to estimated 449,823 in 2030, McHenry County is one of the fastest growing Counties in the nation. Growth has certain effects on the groundwater and thereby the drinking water of the County:

- **increased groundwater pumping** on the existing water supply, while the groundwater supply level recharges slowly or not at all;
- **increase of groundwater contamination.** Proportionally to the population growth;
- the increased groundwater use and contamination could eventually lead to a **drinking water shortage**, and have a **severe negative impact on the natural wetlands, fens, streams, and lakes** in the County.

The Significance of WATER

Shower/Bath Tips

Replace your showerhead with a low-flow version, saving 2.5 gallons per minute.

Take shorter showers. Try a "Navy" shower; get wet, turn off the water, soap and scrub, turn the water on to rinse.

Try to decrease the flow to achieve a comfortable water temperature, instead of increasing the hot or cold water to adjust the water temperature.

Use the minimum amount of water needed for a bath. Close the drain first and fill 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 brushing your teeth, washing your face or shaving.

Toilet Tips

Check for toilet leaks by adding food coloring to the back tank. Do not flush. If the toilet is leaking the food color should appear in the bowl within 1 hour.

Don't use your toilet as a trash can. Unnecessary flushing wastes water.

Consider purchasing low flow toilets or install a water displacement device.

Kitchen Tips

Minimize the use of kitchen sink disposals; they require a lot of water to operate properly.

Store drinking water in the refrigerator instead of letting the tap run to get a cool glass of water.

Thaw meat and frozen foods in the refrigerator overnight instead of running water over them.

When washing dishes by hand, fill one sink or basin with soapy water. Quickly

rinse under a slow stream of water. Use the dirty water to run the disposal if necessary.

Buy dishwashers with water and energy saving options.

The dishwasher should be full before each cycle.

Other Indoor Water Wasters

Adjust the amount of water used in the washing machine according to load size.

As you replace appliances, especially washing machines, **buy the ones that have water saving features.**

Use the water you are putting down the drain for watering a plant, garden or cleaning.

Maintenance Tips

Verify that your home is leak free.

Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. One drop per second, wastes 2,700 gallons in just one year!

Retrofit all household faucets by installing aerators with flow restrictors.



Insulate your water pipes. You'll get hot water faster and avoid wasting water.

If you have a well at your home. Check your pump. If the pump turns on and off while you are not using water, then you could have a leak.



Watering

Get your soil tested to know how much water your lawn really needs. If possible install automatic sprinkler systems with a moisture sensor. It turns on the sprinkler when the soil gets too dry.

Don't water until plants need it.

Far more plants die from over-watering than under-watering. They only need water if the soil is dry (test it with your fingers) or when they show signs of wilting.

Prioritize which plants really need water, and which can wait until the next rain falls. Help the neediest plants first (new plantings, vegetables, and tender annuals).

During droughts: Most lawns, except bluegrass, will simply go dormant if not watered and will recover when rainfall returns! Let them sleep through the drought, don't waste water, money, and effort.

Deep soak each time you water. For a healthy withstanding root system water deeply and infrequently. OR: Install drip irrigation systems and soaker hoses. Watering lightly and frequently causes a shallow root system.

Reduce water loss: Water early in the morning, when it is not windy and when no rain is in forecast. Use sprinklers that emit large droplets rather than a fine mist.

Position sprinklers directly at lawn and garden areas rather than sidewalks, paths, driveways, or fences.

Stop watering whenever runoff occurs, especially on slopes or on compacted, dry soils. Stop watering and allow moisture to penetrate into the soil before restarting.

Use watering cans, whenever possible.

Capture and recycle rainwater. Use the collected rainwater to irrigate by hand. You can also redirect it across lawns and into garden beds away from your house or use stormwater to thrive and create beauty around your home, school, or office

Planting

Go native with your plantings.

Focus on growing drought-tolerant plants. For example, native or non-invasive, drought-tolerant perennial plants which can easily survive with less than an inch of water a week, once established.

Create windbreaks.

Establishing shrubs or placing attractive fencing around vegetable gardens can shelter plants from wind and evaporative moisture loss and prevent soils from drying out as quickly.

Mulch like crazy.

Mulching helps to slow the evaporation of moisture from the soil. This keeps the soil and roots cool and protected. IDEAL: organic mulch.

Keep weeds out of flower and vegetable gardens.

Weeds steal water away other plants. Try to remove them by hand whenever possible.

Plants have it made in the shade.

Besides Planting and Watering

Cover your swimming pool to reduce evaporation and keep your water cleaner.

Use a broom to clean driveways and sidewalks.

Don't let water run while washing your car. Get the car wet and turn off the water while you wash the car down using a bucket of soapy water. OR consider going to a carwash where water is reclaimed and recycled. *During a drought, maybe it's best not to wash the car at all.*

Check for leaks in pipes, hoses, hose connections, and faucets.

Use shut-off nozzles on hoses.

