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Conserving water is easy and effective

As the world grows more environmentally conscious, a common question keeps rolling off the tongues of concerned citizens: What can I do? One of the biggest problems is that the headline-grabbing issues, such as global warming and resource depletion, appear too intimidating and much too far along for regular people to make a difference.

While it's understandable for people to feel a sense of hopelessness, in reality there is much everyone can do to begin turning around the state of the environment. Consider the case of water. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the average person uses 60 gallons of water per day. Seem

high? That's because it is. Experts note that the average individual could decrease his daily water use by 15 to 20 percent and barely notice it. In that light, the issue of water conservation doesn't seem so daunting, does it?

It shouldn't. In fact, trimming water usage can be done in a number of easy and inexpensive ways — ways that will not only save more water, but end up saving individuals money as well.

Look for leaks: Leaky faucets and toilets are some of the biggest wasters of water today. More often than not, these leaks are silent. A leaky toilet, for instance, can waste up to 200 gallons of per day. Discovering if a toilet is leaking can be as simple as a food

coloring test. Simply add food coloring to the toilet's tank. If color appears in the bowl without flushing, the toilet is leaking. Another method is to examine the meter while no water is being used. If the dial is moving, there's a leak. Consult a plumber if either case is true.

Stop running the water: While this seems simple, many people keep their water running when they really don't need to, such as when they're brushing their teeth, shaving or washing their hands and face. According to Denver Water, a family of four that stops running the faucet while brushing their teeth can expect to save 800 gallons of water per month. Should the same family mandate that the washing machine be full in order to do a wash, they'll save more than 2,000 gallons of water per month. While saying "stop running the water" sounds simple, the results are anything but minimal.

Flush toilets only when necessary: Many people flush a toilet more than once when using the bathroom. Do not use the toilet as a fancy garbage can.

Install water-friendly products: Low-flow faucet aerators, for example, can reduce water flow by as much as 50 percent, even though it will seem as though the water pressure has gotten stronger. There are also water-saving shower heads that are equipped with on/off valves, allowing the water to be stopped and restarted.

Another water-friendly product is a front-loading washing machine. Front-loading washing machines use 40 to 60 percent less water, and use less energy as well (as much as 50 percent less according to some estimates). Much of those energy savings are due to the fact that front-loading washers extract 35 percent more water than top-loading washers, meaning it doesn't take as much time (and, as a result, energy) to dry your clothes once they've been washed. In addition, some state governments offer tax credits and rebates to those who have purchased a front-loading washer.

Keep a pitcher of cold water in the refrigerator: How much water is wasted running the faucet while waiting for the water to get cold?

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