

Receive your free low-flow showerhead and start conserving water  
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Did you know that you may be using over 100 gallons of water per day? According to a report by the United States Geologic Service, individuals in the United States average about 105 gallons per day usage of the precious liquid. That is certainly overkill since water is not a renewable resource and it costs money. According to the U.S. federal government, the average U.S. family spends about \$1,300.00 a year on home utility bills. We also consume about 75 percent more energy per family than most countries in Europe, Australia and Japan. Perhaps its time to start being more efficient with our resources!

The bathroom would be a good place to start conserving. Over 40 percent of our indoor water use in the home goes toward flushing the toilet and about 33 percent goes toward bathing. There are many ways that water can be conserved without being inconvenienced. Changing bad habits may be challenging at first, but very soon, good practices become routine. For example, using a low-flow showerhead not only conserves water, but will save money on the utility bill. Water pressure differences are rarely noticed and water usage in the shower can be cut by 30 percent or more.

The typical showerhead uses about 5 to 8 gallons a minute. Most low-flow models use only 2 ½ gallons per minute. This reduction in water use and heating saves money on the water and electric bills and can cut up to \$600.00 per year depending on use. As far as the cost of the low-flow showerhead, how about free? That's right, the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District is giving them away. Thanks to a Community Education Grant from the Peace River Basin Board, Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), the funds that have been awarded are being used to purchase low-flow showerheads. On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, at the Sebring Civic Center, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., not only can attendees receive a free showerhead, but can learn some great water saving tips. Speaker Nick Makris, Staff Water Conservation Analyst from the SWFWMD, will be present to talk about the ecological reasons to conserve water. A demonstration on watersheds and wetlands will also be presented and the entire workshop is free. There will be yummy refreshments as well.

The program is an "exchange," so make sure to bring in the old water guzzling showerhead and exchange it for a new efficient one. This is a great way to get on the path of being an educated and wise steward of our natural resources.

Here are some more ways to practice good conservation habits:

- Install flow restrictors or water faucet aerators on your faucets. These devices are designed to inject air into the water as it flows from the faucet. There is very little difference in flow and about 2 – 16 gallons of water per day may be saved. The cost is minimal
- Put an insulating blanket around your water heater and adjust the temperature to 140 degrees F (or lower). Much of the heat from the heater is lost because of a lack of insulation around the tank. Also exposed hot and cold water pipes may be insulated with special foams.

- Place a 5 gallon bucket in the shower. While waiting for the water to get hot, capture the water that would otherwise go down the drain and use it to water your plants or wash your car.
- Fix leaky faucets or pipes. It is surprising how much water a small leak wastes.
- If you wash dishes by hand--and that's the best way--don't leave the water running for rinsing. If you have two sinks, fill one with rinse water. If you only have one sink, use a spray device or short blasts instead of letting the water run. Saves 200 to 500 gallons a month.
- When washing dishes by hand, use the least amount of detergent possible. This minimizes rinse water needed. Saves 50 to 150 gallons a month.
- Use the garbage disposal less and the garbage more (even better--compost!). Saves 50 to 150 gallons a month.
- Don't keep water running while brushing teeth or washing faces or hands. Turn it off until it is needed.

There are hundreds of small ways to save water both indoors and outdoors. All you have to do is make an effort and get educated. Get creative and start keeping track of about how much water you save a month. Watch your bill go down and feel good about helping the environment. If you have any questions about the upcoming workshop on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, please give us a call at (863) 402-6545. We hope to see you soon!