

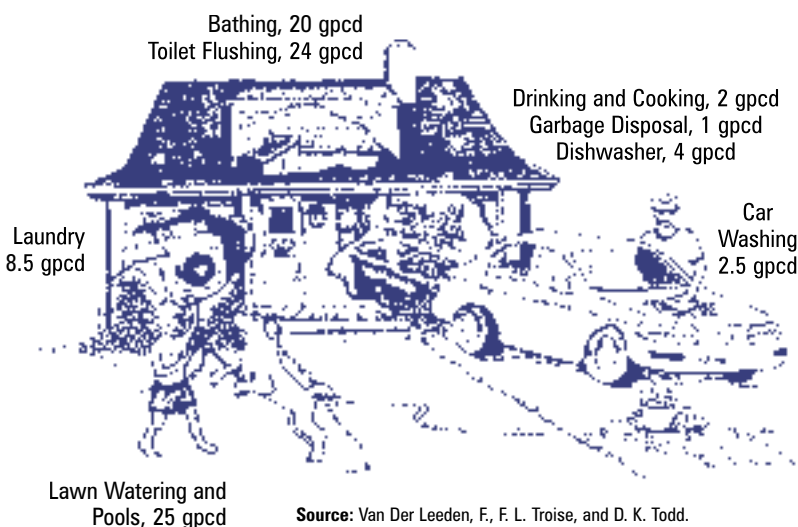
## 4. How Do We Use Drinking Water In Our Homes?

We take our water supplies for granted, yet they are limited. Only one percent of all the world's water can be used for drinking. Nearly 97 percent of the world's water is salty or otherwise undrinkable, and the other two percent is locked away in ice caps and glaciers. There is no "new" water: whether our source water is a stream, river, lake, spring, or well, we are using the same water the dinosaurs used millions of years ago.

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### Common Household Uses of Drinking Water\*

(\*Gallons per Capita per Day)



Source: Van Der Leeden, F., F. L. Troise, and D. K. Todd.  
The Water Encyclopedia. Lewis Publishers, Inc. Second Edition, 1990.

The average American uses about 90 gallons of water each day in the home, and each American household uses approximately 107,000 gallons of water each year.<sup>1</sup> For the most part, we use water treated to meet drinking water standards to flush toilets, water lawns, and wash dishes, clothes, and cars. In fact, 50-70 percent of home water is used for watering lawns and gardens.<sup>2</sup> Nearly 14 percent of the water a typical homeowner pays for is never even used—it leaks down the drain.<sup>3</sup>

### How Much Water Do Homes In The U.S. Use Compared To Other Countries?

Americans use much more water each day than individuals in both developed and undeveloped countries: For example, the average European uses 53 gallons; the average Sub-Saharan citizen, 3-5 gallons.<sup>4</sup>

Water efficiency plays an important role in protecting water sources and improving water quality. By using water wisely, we can save money and help the environment. Water efficiency means using less water to provide the same benefit. Using water-saving techniques could save you hundreds of dollars each year, while also reducing the amount of pollutants entering our waterways.

### How Do Drinking Water Utilities Conserve Water?

Water utilities forecast water source availability, growth in population, and water demand to ensure adequate future water supplies during normal conditions, as well as periods of drought. When water shortages are predicted or experienced, water utilities have many options for conserving water. Temporary cutbacks or permanent operating adjustments can help conserve water.

Temporary cutbacks may include:

- Reduction of system-wide operating pressure, and
- Water use bans, restrictions, and rationing.

Permanent conservation measures may include:

- Subsidizing use of water-efficient faucets, toilets, and showerheads,
- Public education and voluntary use reduction,
- Billing practices that impose higher rates for higher amounts of water use,
- Building codes that require water-efficient fixtures and appliances,
- Leak detection surveys and meter testing, repair, and replacement, and
- Reduction in use and increase in recycling of industrial water.

## How Can Businesses Conserve Water?

The industrial and commercial sectors can conserve water through recycling and waste reduction. Industry has implemented conservation measures to comply with state and federal water pollution con-

trols. Evaluation of industrial plant data may show that a particular process or manufacturing step uses the most water or causes the greatest contamination. Such areas can be targeted for water conservation. Also, water that is contaminated by one process may be usable in other plant processes that do not require high-quality water.

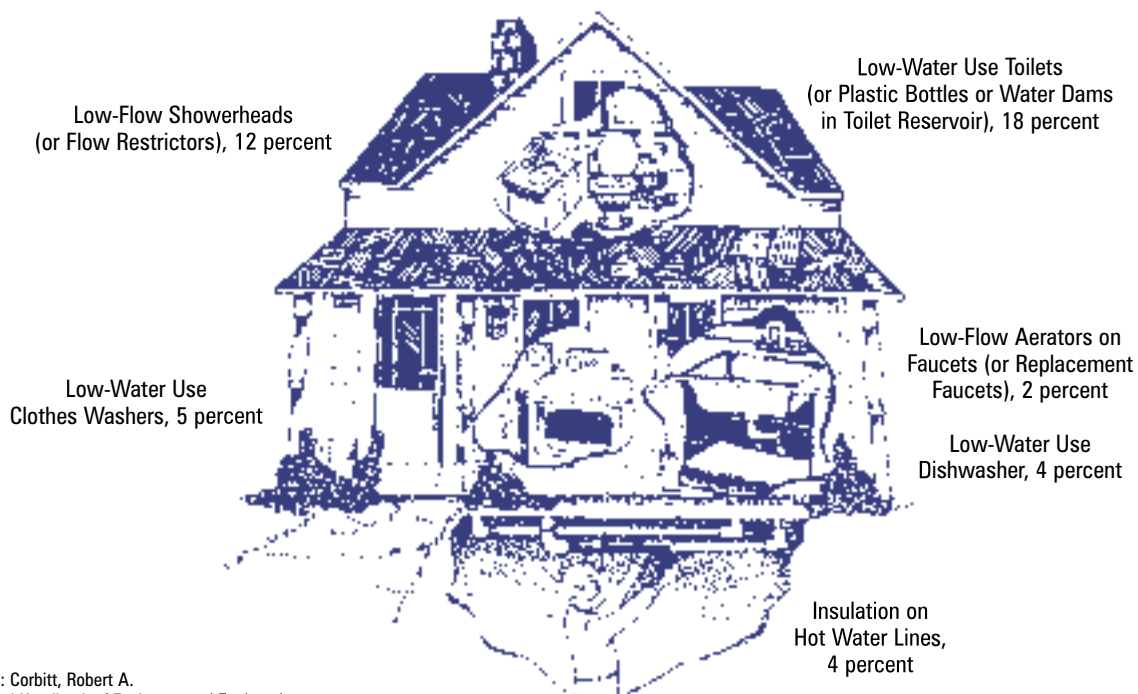
## How Can I Conserve Water?

The national average cost of water is \$2.00 per 1,000 gallons. The average American family spends about \$474 each year on water and sewage charges.<sup>5</sup> American households spend an additional \$230 per year on water heating costs.<sup>6</sup> By replacing appliances such as the dishwasher and inefficient fixtures such as toilets and showerheads, you can save a substantial amount each year in water, sewage, and energy costs.

There are many ways to save water in and around your home. Here are the five that might get the best results:

### Ways To Save Water At Home\*

(\*Water Savings as Percent of Total Interior Water Use)



Source: Corbitt, Robert A.  
Standard Handbook of Environmental Engineering.  
McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1989.

- *Stop Leaks.*
- *Replace Old Toilets* with models that use 1.6 gallons or less per flush.
- *Replace Old Clothes Washers* with EPA Energy Star certified models.
- *Plant the Right Kind of Garden* that requires less water.
- *Provide Only the Water Plants Need.*

For more information on ways to conserve water in the home, see [www.epa.gov/water/waterefficiency.html](http://www.epa.gov/water/waterefficiency.html) or [www.h2ouse.org](http://www.h2ouse.org).

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<sup>1</sup> *Water Trivia Facts*, EPA 80-F-95-001.

<sup>2</sup> *AWWA Stats on Tap*.

<sup>3</sup> *Using Water Wisely in the Home*, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> *The Use of Water Today*, World Water Council.

<sup>5</sup> *Investing in America's Water Infrastructure*, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> *Using Water Wisely in the Home*, 2002.




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