



## WATER COSTS AND CONSERVATION

Water costs! Despite the prevailing view by many that water is easy to come by and is a free gift of nature, the extensive work which is involved in treating and bringing the precious commodity to our homes and offices is no cheap accomplishment.

Everyday, expensive imported chemicals are used in the water treatment process, electricity is used to pump water over hills and valleys, and pipes, pumps and other fittings are used to maintain a reliable service. This all costs!

While the amount of water used varies depending on personal habits, a typical single-family home in Jamaica uses between 3,000 and 5,000 gallons of treated water per month.

Studies done around the world show that approximately 10% of the water used in homes is wasted because of leaks. These studies also show that water consumption within an average household can be reduced by about 30% by using proper water saving devices and good conservation practices.

There are 4 basic ways to save water:-

**Economize** - Be conscious of the amount of water you utilize and use less whenever you can.

**Fix Leaks** - A leak of merely 1 drop per second, wastes 2,400 gallons per year! Most leaks are easy to repair with some basic know-how and a few simple tools.

**Water-saving Devices** - There are a number of simple devices that can significantly reduce water usage. These include aerators, flow regulators and displacement devices.

**Re-use Water** - Used water, such as at the kitchen sink and at the washstand, is often suitable for other purposes. If this "grey water" is used more than once it saves water for other uses.

## CONSERVING WATER AROUND THE HOME

### IN THE BATHROOM

- Check your toilet for leaks. The rubber bung (also called the plunger ball) in your toilet tank is sometimes the source of undetected leaks, as it wears with age. Put a little food colouring into your toilet tank and leave it for 10-15 minutes without flushing. If colouring appears in the toilet bowl, you will probably need to clean the bung and valve seat into which the bung fits and try the food colouring test again. If the leaks persists, then you will need to replace the bung and valve seat. If the colour appears in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak that should be repaired immediately.
- Purchase water-conserving toilets or place a one quart plastic bottle in your large, older toilet tank away from movable parts. You may also regulate the water level by adjusting the float. A leaky toilet can waste as much as 200 gallons/260 litres of water per day. Each time you flush, you waste water, so do not flush unnecessarily.
- A typical shower uses 5-10 gallons of water per minute and most of the water is not really utilised. Limit the time the shower is on to the time it takes to wet your body and to wash off the lather. Install showerheads or flow restrictors. They will cut the flow of water to about 3 gallons per minute .... and that's saving a lot of water and money too.
- Use just a glassful of water to brush your teeth, not a continuously running pipe.
- Just a little in the basin is enough to clean your razor.

### IN THE KITCHEN

- A dripping faucet can waste up to 7,600 litres (2,000 gallons) of water per year.
- Wipe away gravy, grease and food scraps from plates and bowls before washing.
- If you wash dishes by hand, don't leave the water running for rinsing. If you have two sinks, fill one with soapy water and one with rinse water. If you have only one sink, gather washed dishes in a dish rack and rinse them with a pan full of water. Similarly, don't let the faucet run while you clean vegetables. Just rinse them in a sink or a pan of clean water.

## OUTDOORS

- Instead of washing driveways, sidewalks, gutters and steps, use a hard broom to sweep these areas.
- Don't use fresh water for your plants and garden. Save the rinse water from your kitchen or laundry, and do your watering in the early morning - this prevents fungus growth, which occurs when you water at dusk.
- Don't let your children play with taps, hoses and sprinklers. Their innocent frolic on a hot day could waste hundreds of gallons of precious water.
- Wash your car with a bucket of water and a rag, not a running hose.

## BE A LEAK DETECTIVE

High meter readings and high water bills could be the result of leakage from your yard piping or plumbing fixtures in the house. To detect whether or not you have a leak, do the following:

- Shut off all your plumbing fixtures
- Look at your water meter and read the numbers and write them down, then do it again a few hours later
- If the second number is larger, the difference in the two numbers will increase only if water is going through the meter. There is no defect that will cause an increase in number for any other reason.
- Many leaks at faucets are caused by worn washers. To stop a faucet leak, turn off the lock-off or supply line, screw off the pipe cock and replace the washer taking care to insert the right size.
- To repair other leaks, call in a competent plumber as soon as the leaks are detected.

Fresh clean drinking water is yours to use whenever you need it, but not to waste. It is too valuable. Remember that a little effort and a little common sense will make a big difference. Following the tips outlined can save you thousands of litres and dollars every year. So be alert. If you see water being wasted in your home, tighten up. If you see it being wasted anywhere else, speak up. Water is life. **DO THE RIGHT THING ... conserve water and save.**