LIVING GREEN

Education for a Healthy Future

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Living Green with SNAP

Education for a Healthy Future

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE LIVING GREEN PROGRAM?

Contact:

Kim Kreber

SNAP Conservation Education Coordinator

(509)744-3370 x 410

kreber@snapwa.org

www.livinggreensnap.org

Every Drop Counts

This month's Living Green issue covers the topic of water conservation both indoors and outdoors. Summer is just around the corner, so here are some tips to remember about water use.

Water covers approximately 70 percent of the Earth's surface, but less than 1 percent of that is available for human use. The world must share this small amount for agricultural, domestic, commercial, industrial, and environmental needs. Across the globe, water consumption has tripled in the last 50 years. Managing the supply and availability of water is one of the most critical natural resource issues facing the United States and the world.

Homes use more than half of publicly supplied water in the United States, which is significantly more than is used by either business or industry. A family of four can use approximately 400 gallons of water every day. Roughly 70% of this is indoor use and 30% outdoors. Those amounts used can increase depending on location; for example, the arid West has some of the highest per capita residential water use because of landscape irrigation.

With water use in the United States increasing every year, many regions are starting to feel the pressure. In the last five years, nearly every region of the country has experienced water shortages. At least 36 states are anticipating local, regional, or statewide water shortages by 2013, even under non-drought conditions.

Further Resources:
http://www.epa.gov/WaterSense/

EVERY DROP COUNTS

FLUSHING YOUR WATER HEATER

This is a good idea to flush your water heater at least once a year. If you live in an area with hard water, you may want to perform this task more times during the year.

Step 1: Turn off the Water Supply

If you have an electric water heater, turn off the power at the breaker-box. If yours is a gas heater, turn the thermostat to the "pilot" setting. Connect a hose to the drain valve located close to the thermostat, but don't open the valve yet. Turn off the cold-water supply that feeds the water-heater.

Step 2: Drain the Hot Water

Inside your house, open up one of the hot-water faucets in one of your sinks or tubs. This will prevent a vacuum from forming in the lines. Go back to the water-heater, and open the drain valve to drain the hot water out of the tank. Make sure the far end of the hose is draining somewhere that won't be harmed by hot water. An outside driveway is ideal.

Step 3: Flush Out Remaining Sediment

Once the water stops flowing out of the far end of the hose, turn the water supply back on. This will flush out any remaining sediment left behind in the heater. Once the water runs clear from the end of the hose, close the DRAIN valve. Don't forget to turn the hot-water faucet inside your house back off.

The heating element could possibly blow if there is no water in the tank. Some tanks may need to be completely full in order to prevent damage. When in doubt, always read the warnings and instructions on the tank label carefully because each tank may vary!

Step 4: Test Pressure-Release Valves

Turn the power-supply to the water heater back on at the breaker box (or the thermostat), after the tank has filled with water. Once the water temperature has been brought back up, test the pressure-relief valve according to the manufacturer's instructions. This safety device is designed to prevent excess pressure build-up or overheating inside the tank. If it's faulty, you may need to have it replaced by a licensed plumber.

WATER SAVING TIPS FOR APARTMENTS

Low-Flow Showerhead Remove your old showerhead and replace it with a low-flow model. When you move, pack up the low-flow showerhead and put the original showerhead back on.

Displace Water in Your Toilet Tank Find a plastic bottle. Fill it with gravel. Place it in your toilet tank. You can leave this for the next tenant or take it with you.

Hot Water Bottle/Electric Blanket Instead of turning up the thermostat, you can invest in an electric blanket or a hot water bottle. Each of these uses less energy than a central heating system.

Repairs One of the benefits of having a landlord is that they will fix things. Don't let a slightly leaky faucet go unrepaired. Leaks account for 13% of home water usage. You can fix it yourself or get your landlord to do it.

EVERY DROP COUNTS

ASTHMA AWARENESS MONTH

Chemical Irritants

Chemical irritants are found in some products in your house and may trigger asthma. Your asthma or your child's asthma may be worse around products such as cleaners, paints, adhesives, pesticides, cosmetics or air fresheners.

Chemical irritants are also present in schools and can be found in commonly used cleaning supplies and educational kits.

Chemical irritants may exacerbate asthma. At sufficient concentrations in the air, many products can trigger a reaction.

Asthma Awareness (Continued):

What can you do?

If you find that your asthma or your child's asthma gets worse when you use a certain product, consider trying different products. If you must use a product, then you should:

- Make sure your child is not around.
- Open windows or doors, or use an exhaust fan.
- Always follow the instructions on the product label.

What are some other environmental triggers?

- Secondhand smoke ~ If quitting is not an option, do outdoors.
- Dust mites ~ Cover your mattress and pillowcases in a dust-proof cover.
- Molds ~ Fix leaky faucets, pipes or other sources of water.
- Pests ~ Keep food and garbage in closed containers.
- Pets ~ Dander – Keep them outdoors or keep them out of sleeping areas.
- Nitrogen Dioxide
- Outdoor Air Pollution
- Wood Smoke

How to Repair an Outdoor Garden Hose

1st Locate the leaks. If it didn't squirt you in the face, you may have to go on a hole hunt. Does your hose leak at the faucet? Does it leak where you've joined two hoses? Does it leak at the point where you've attached a sprinkler head or spraying device? Or does it leak somewhere in the middle?

2nd Apply petroleum jelly to leaky joints. Detach the hose from other hoses or devices, and thoroughly lube the threads of each with petroleum jelly. Re-attach and you will notice fewer leaks or even none at all. Be careful trying to re-attach the items as your hands will be slick.

3rd Use rubber cement for tears or punctures. Using a dry paper towel, dry off the section of hose where there is a hole or cut. If the hole is within a foot (30 cm) of the end of the hose, try using a piece of dowel with paper towel wrapped it to clean the inside of the hose. Apply some rubber cement to-and around-the hole. Fill in the hole, but not so much that it gets inside of the hose. This could result in clogging up the hose, and increasing the water's pressure, causing more leaks and an incentive for the hose to burst at that weak spot.

4th Use a tire puncture repair kit. These are the most commonly sold at bicycle repair shops, body shops, car part stores, etc. Carefully read the directions of use, and apply the repair substance to the hole. After drying, buy a small sheet of solid rubber from a craft store, hardware store or other supplier. You can also cut a small square out of an old rubber rain boot or any other rubber item you no longer use. Glue it over the leak and let dry (use glue that is able to keep the rubber attached strongly).

5th Get a coupling for more severe tears. They are available at a hardware store. Shut-off the water to the hose and cut out the bad portion. Splice in the repair coupling. It will have detailed instructions on the label.

WASTE FREE LAWN & GARDEN

- Use food scraps, yard trimmings, and other organic waste to create a compost pile. Compost is a rich soil amendment that can help increase water retention, decrease erosion, and replace chemical fertilizers.
- Don't over-fertilize. A slow-release organic fertilizer applied once in the fall is sufficient for most lawns.
- Many plants and insects can serve as non-toxic, natural deterrents to weeds and garden pests. Introduce ladybugs to eat aphids, plant marigolds to ward off beetles, and look for quick-sprouting plants to block weed growth.
- If you have healthy plants that you want to replace, donate them to community gardens or schools, or offer them to neighbors.
- Buy recycled-content gardening equipment and tools, such as garden hoses made from old tires, stepping stones made from old glass bottles, or hand tools made with recycled plastic. You can also use plastic lumber made from recycled plastic bottles and bags to make flower beds, trellises, decks, and birdhouses.
- Recycle used oil and tires from lawn and garden equipment.
- Cut the bottoms off plastic milk jugs or use small paper bags to protect young seedlings from frost, wind, heavy rain, and roving animals. Remember to recycle the bags and jugs when the seedlings have grown.
- Reduce your use of fertilizers and pesticides by planting grass and other vegetation that is native to your area.
- Keep your lawn mower and other equipment in efficient operating condition by performing regular maintenance according to the owner's manual. Purchase a nozzle that prevents fuel spills when refilling your lawn mower. Use manual tools when appropriate to save fuel and protect air quality.
- Raise the cutting height of your lawn mower during the hot summer months to keep grass roots shaded and cooler, reducing weed growth, browning, and the need for watering. When you mow, "grasscycle" by leaving grass clippings on your lawn instead of bagging them or use a mulching mower. The clippings will return nutrients to the soil instead of taking up space in landfills.
- If you have a need for large lawn and garden equipment, such as tillers or chainsaws, you can reduce waste (and save money) by renting or borrowing the equipment.
- Shred untreated wood and leaf wastes into chips and use them as mulch on garden beds to prevent weed growth, retain moisture, regulate soil temperature, and add nutrients back to the soil.
- Conserve water. Use barrels to collect rain water and use it to water plants. Check hoses for leaks before watering plants, and position sprinklers so they water only plants, not the sidewalk, street, or house. Also remember to water during the cooler parts of the day (early morning is best) to avoid evaporation.

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Shipping Address