

FACT SHEET

THE GREY WATER STORY

From your laundry to your garden

When it comes to conserving water, every household can make a difference. Here are some simple steps families can take to recycle grey water used in and around your home.

What is grey water?

Grey water is waste water which comes from baths, showers and the laundry rinse cycle. This water, if captured, diverted, stored or treated appropriately, can be reused in gardens and for other domestic chores such as flushing toilets and washing clothes.

Reusing grey water in this way can save significant amounts of water for the average Australian home, whether in the city or the bush. It's possible to save up to 50,000 litres of drinking water every year simply by gardening with grey water*.

Can household water savings really make a difference?

Sydney Water suggests that approximately 61 per cent of the total wastewater produced by an average household can be used as grey water, so you can see the benefits in both your garden and your water bill. Even if you don't save the lot, every little bit helps.

So where do I start?

A survey recently commissioned by BioZet found that although about 80 per cent of Australian respondents would like to recycle their water, about 45 per cent have not installed a grey water system because they do not know enough about them and a further 33 per cent are concerned about installation costs.

Households can actually start reusing grey water straight away if they want. There are a number of different ways to become a grey water user. These options include:

Rinse Cycle

The easiest way to recycle grey water is to collect your washing machine rinse cycle and use it to water your garden. A hose can be used to collect the water from your washing machine and into a bucket.

If you are using suitable products in your washing machine such as BioZet, which is low in sodium and doesn't contain added phosphorus, the grey water will not require any further treatment. Sodium dehydrates and hinders water take-up in plants while phosphorus can cause algae blooms in waterways.

Direct Diversion System

A licensed plumber can install a diversion system in your home. Direct diversion does not treat the grey water – so again you will need to be mindful of the substances in it, including cleaning products you are using, before tipping the grey water on your garden.

When using direct diversion, it's a good idea to install something called a 'coarse screen,' which ultimately acts as a filter to get rid of any solid material which might clog the pipe or pollute the garden. Simple piping can divert the waste water for use on a garden or lawn.

Treatment System

This option involves installing a fully automated system with underground piping which filters, treats and spreads grey water across your entire lawn.

Treatment systems are expensive, but very effective for large gardens and improve the quality of your grey water for more extensive use such as spreading on your garden, flushing toilets and washing clothes. There are lots of options, so contact your council or local hardware store as a first step to discuss installing a grey water treatment system in your home.



Using grey water safely and responsibly

Reusing grey water in the home is a fantastic way to do your bit for water conservation. However, grey water can be dangerous if not recycled properly. Take a look at the following guidelines and consult your local council before getting started.

1. Choose the safest source of grey water

Your laundry rinse cycle water is the safest source of grey water as kitchen and dishwasher run off can become easily contaminated by food stuffs and solids. Grey water shouldn't be confused with black water – which is waste water from toilets and urinals that requires treatment before reuse.

2. Watch what you wash with

Choose products that are biodegradable with low levels of sodium and no added phosphorus in order to uphold the quality of your recycled grey water. This will help ensure that your grey water is suitable for use on your garden.

3. Keep away from kids and pets

Grey water is definitely not for drinking – even when it's been treated.

4. Don't divert grey water to vegetables that will be eaten raw

Grey water is not for drinking – nor is it for eating. Vegetables and herbs treated with grey water can only be consumed if they are well cooked and cleaned before consumption.

5. Turn your grey water diverter off when you are using damaging materials like bleach or extremely dirty or soiled items like nappies

Don't collect rinse cycle water if you have just cleaned items such as soiled nappies. Keep your grey water clean! Don't divert the grey water when using any items you don't think your plants and lawn will enjoy.

6. Keep an eye on your plants and garden

You might notice a difference in the way your garden is growing – even when following these guidelines. While most plants will be fine, some of our native flora may not enjoy grey water, so monitor your garden for any changes and reuse your grey water on alternative plants if necessary. Try to keep track of what you're putting down your sink. If in doubt, make sure you use biodegradable products and contact your local council with any questions.

Important considerations before reusing grey water

It is important to note that there are some council restrictions surrounding the use of grey water, which have been put in place to ensure that it's safe and free from contamination. For more information about the proper use of grey water and whether it is suitable for your garden – call your local council or visit their website, they will be able to answer your questions.

These Government sites will provide further information on grey water reuse.

ACT www.actpla.act.gov.au

NSW www.health.nsw.gov.au

NT www.nt.gov.au/health

QLD www.nrm.qld.gov.au

SA www.health.sa.gov.au

TAS www.dier.tas.gov.au

WA www.health.wa.gov.au

Buying environmentally responsible products

When recycling grey water in your home, it's important to look at the types of products you are using, in particular in your laundry. Unlike most other washing powders on the market, all BioZet products contain no added phosphorus one of the lowest levels of sodium of any laundry product. High levels of sodium can be bad for plant physiology, dehydrating plants and causing a loss of soil structure. Low levels of sodium are desirable when waste water is used in vegetation or soil absorption areas.

For further information please contact:

BioZet customer care on 1800 805 730.