

Using Gray Water

Why we care

Oregon is known for its rainy winters, but our summers are just the opposite. Reducing water use, especially during the peak dry spell, can lower your water and sewer bill, help maintain stream flows for fish, and save energy in both treating water for drinking quality and treating the effluent after it goes down the drain.

Simple, positive steps

Using gray water (from baths, showers, sinks, and laundry) is one way to reduce environmental and financial costs. One of the simplest retrofits is the laundry-to-landscape system, which uses the pump in your clothes washer to deliver wastewater to your plants.

- Here are questions to ask yourself: Do I have access to the drain pipes for laundry, showers, or sinks? Do I have trees or shrubs that could use the water? For a complete evaluation, see DEQ's [Reusing Gray Water in Your Landscape](#).
- The next step is to assess your home water use; then design your system to match your plant's water needs with the knowledge of your site constraints. See the [article by Depave](#).
- Fill out a DEQ permit, listed on the website above, along with a plan showing the location and design of the system, the intended use, and fixtures that will be used.
- If you wish to use gray water to flush toilets, a plumbing permit is required. See the Oregon Smart Guide: [Water Conservation Systems](#).
- Examples of simple systems can be found at [Grey Water Action](#). For more complete descriptions, see [San Francisco's guide](#) or [New Mexico's guide](#).

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.