

Improving and decorating your home

▶ Water management

Water conservation

Water seems to be in the news every week. In the UK, it's extremes of weather – violent rain storms and flooding in some areas, and lengthening periods of near drought in others. Further afield, it's the potentially catastrophic effect on communities in low-lying parts of the world of sea level rises caused by global warming, or the soil erosion and flash flooding caused by unregulated deforestation and logging. For whatever reason, water is urgent and important news. We all know that Earth is a watery planet, but only 3% of the Earth's water is fresh (the rest is salty), and only half of one per cent of that is easily available in lakes, rivers and through shallow boreholes (the rest is in ice fields, in saturated land or deep underground).

We need to keep reminding ourselves that fresh water is not a limitless resource. It is precious, and we need to take care of it. There is another environmental impact from water supply and another good reason for curbing its use: pumping water through supply and disposal systems uses large amounts of electrical power, and generating this leads to the emission of greenhouse gases, adding to global warming.

Repair leaking taps. A dripping tap can waste up to 30 litres of water a day. In the Woking area our fresh water supplier is Three Valleys Water plc. As well as piping water to our homes, they purify and test it, and, in recent years, have also

Water facts

- ▶ **Only 1% of the Earth's water can be used for drinking.**
- ▶ **The average family uses twice the amount of water than their parents did just thirty years ago.**
- ▶ **South East England has 50% less rainfall on average than the rest of the country.**
- ▶ **Customers in the Three Valleys Water supply area are among the highest users of water in the UK, unmetered customers use up to 191 litres of water per day, only 2 litres of which is for drinking!**
- ▶ **Having a bath can use 85 litres of water, a quick shower uses only 30.**
- ▶ **Leaving the tap on when brushing your teeth can waste up to 14 litres of water each time you brush.**
- ▶ **A hosepipe can use the same amount of water in one hour as an average family uses in two days.**



THREE VALLEYS WATER

The information in this section draws on material supplied by Three Valleys Water plc, whose support is gratefully acknowledged.



Water |

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installed meters outside residents' homes to monitor water use. There are three aspects to good water management:

- ▶ Make sure that all the water Three Valleys provides (and you're paying for) actually gets to you by preventing and curing leaks!
- ▶ Be sparing: choose efficient appliances and adopt good practices
- ▶ Re-use waste water wherever practical

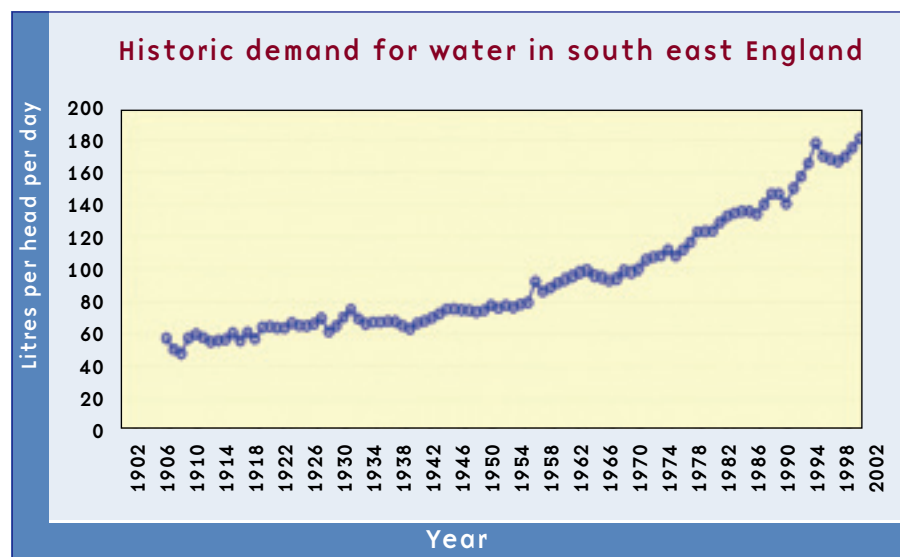
Leaks

Three Valleys Water is responsible for the mains supply of water and all the pipework up to the outside walls of our premises. They urge residents to notify them about any leaks they have seen, using 'Leakspotters' (free-phone) hotline on 0800 376 5325.

Inside a property, water leaks are the resident's responsibility. Look for the tell tale signs – damp patches on walls and floors, sounds of dripping – and movement on your water meter when all the appliances are switched off. It is your responsibility to ensure a plumber inspects and attends to any leaks within your home.

Water usage in the home

As the graph shows, water usage in our area has been rising steadily, and now stands at nearly 200 litres (about 44 gallons) person every day (which is one of the highest levels of consumption in the UK). In south east England, the overall increase is



Appliance / Use	Average no. of litres per use
Bath (each fill)	85
Shower	30
Power shower	75
Toilet flushing (per flush)	8
Hand basin (washing and teeth cleaning under running tap)	15
Food preparation and cooking (per person per day)	15
Dishwashing by hand (per wash)	10
Automatic dishwasher (per load)	22
Clothes washing machine (per load)	85
Waste disposal unit (per use)	16
Hosepipe usage (garden and car washing (10 minutes' use)	90
Garden sprinkler (10 minutes' use)	100
Dripping tap (per day – 1 drip /sec)	4

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partly due to the increasing numbers of households in the region, but it is also due to the increasing numbers of washing machines and dishwashers and use of water in the garden.

New designs of these appliances have made them more water (and energy) efficient, but they are still big users of fresh water, direct from the mains. The table shows typical figures for the common kitchen and bathroom, and also in the garden.

By making a simple diary of how often you use these devices and any other water-using appliances, you can make a good estimate of total water consumption over a period – say a week or a month – and then cross-check the estimates against actual meter readings at the start and end of the test period. This will give good information on how water is being used in the household or business, and can lead to some positive steps for cutting consumption.

Three Valleys can supply a free booklet for recording the information, together with advice on interpreting and responding to it. They also produce a free leaflet, **Where's Your Water Going?**, which gives advice on how to use your water meter to monitor the consumption of your appliances.

Cutting water usage

Once you have a rough idea of how much water you are using, you can start to put in practice some simple steps to help them cut consumption and bills.

Better practice in the household

Do it better...	Potential saving per use (litres)
▶ Put the plug in the bathroom hand basin if possible	2
▶ Clean teeth using a mug of water, not a running tap	4
▶ Put a 'Hippo' in the toilet cistern to control the volume of fresh water per flush	2
▶ Shower (not powered), instead of a bath	50
▶ Washing machine: Full loads only	30
▶ Dishwasher: Full loads only	10
▶ Watering can / bucket for the garden and car washing – not hosepipe	60
▶ Repair dripping taps	28 (per week)
▶ Wash fruit and vegetable in a bowl, not under a running tap	45 (per week)



NB – If the saving involves **hot water**, remember there'll be an energy saving as well.

Water |


 MORE INFO


**The Environment Agency,
Thames Region**

Tel: 08708 506 506

Web: www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Three Valleys Water plc

PO Box 48
Bishops Rise
Hatfield
Herts
AL10 9HL

Tel: 0845 782 3333,

Web: www.3valleys.co.uk

Water UK

Tel: 020 7344 1844

Web: www.water.org.uk




**Woking Borough
Council's guidance
on Climate Neutral
Development**

Web: www.woking.gov.uk/climatechange

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Woking residents are getting used to sorting their general waste, because they realise that different types – glass, paper, plastic, metals – need to be treated differently by the refuse collectors.

The same is true for waste water:

-  The output from toilets is flushed down the 'foul water' drain, and led through a separate sewerage system to the treatment works. This is to protect public health and hygiene from harmful or toxic organisms or substances.
-  Waste fluids containing aggressive chemicals such as acids and fluids which don't mix with water, such as engine oil or oil-based paints, shouldn't be flushed down the toilet, or poured down the kitchen sink or washbasin with other wastewater. The materials they contain are liable to affect the natural biological purification processes that occur in waste water treatment works. **Contact Woking Borough Council's Environmental Health Department, for advice on disposal of chemicals.**
-  'Grey' water, from washing up, washing machines and baths, is usually much less contaminated, and should be perfectly safe for use in the garden. Using grey water, along with rainwater collected in a butt, it is quite possible in the UK to maintain a healthy and productive garden throughout the whole year without having to use any new mains water.

 **MORE ADVICE**



-  Householders should consider installing a system to collect the grey water from baths, basins and washing machines, to avoid the costs of these extra purchases. Advice on such systems can be obtained from the **Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS)**.



Photo credit: Straight pic


**Water Regulations Advisory
Scheme (WRAS)**

Tel: 01495 248454

Email: info@wras.co.ukWeb: www.wras.co.uk