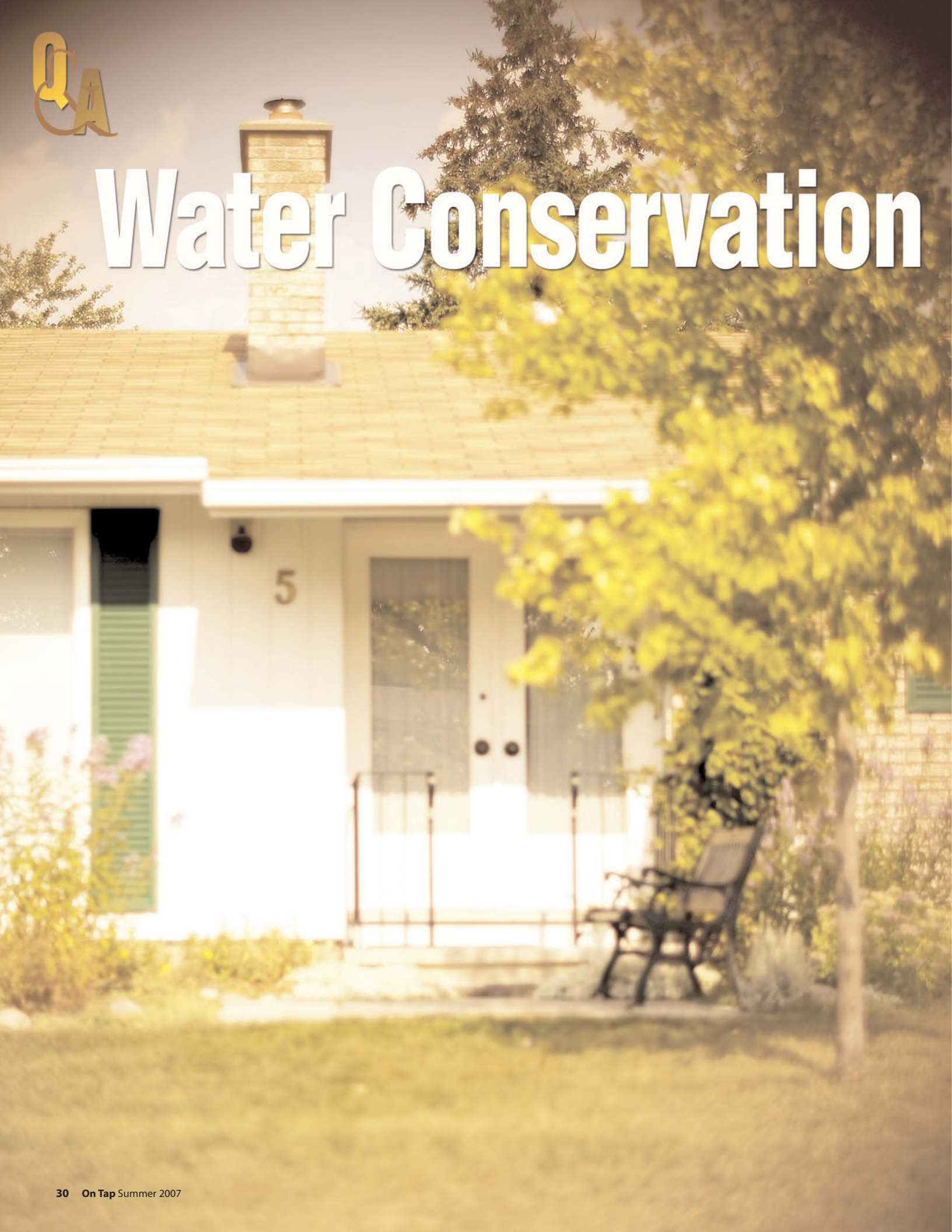




Water Conservation



Question and Answer

IN THE HOME

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On Tap Editor



Q: Why conserve water?

A: Over the last several years, interest in water conservation has increased, particularly in the western U.S. where drought conditions persist. Many communities now have policies about water usage and some charge more based on increasing consumption. Albuquerque, New Mexico, even went as far as making water waste illegal.

There are many reasons for conserving water. Here are three of the most compelling:

1. It's the right thing to do. Everyone needs water to survive. Simply put, we have an obligation to share this vital resource and not waste it.
2. We have more people, but not more water. The amount of water on Earth remains the same while population soars. We can take steps now or we can be forced into them down the road.
3. It will save money. The less water you use, the less you have to pay, and the more money you'll have for other things.

Not only will you save money, you'll help your community save money too. "If conservation is practiced widely by homeowners within a community, you have sustained reductions in demand at the water treatment facility and lowered flows at the wastewater treatment facility," says John Flowers, water efficiency program

director with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). "Then, not only are the consumers reducing their costs, but the town may be able to defer the investment of a new plant."



Q: How much water do homeowners use?

A: While industry and agriculture use larger percentages of available water, households are still big users and the amount used has increased over time. A century ago, Americans used approximately 10 gallons of water to drink, cook, clean, and bath. Today, an average American uses more than 100 gallons of water and the average household more than 260 gallons. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a typical family in the U.S. spends approximately \$475 each year on water and sewage charges.

Q: What are the biggest water users in a home?

A: In most homes, toilets, washing machines, and dishwashers use the most water. Newer models, such as low-flow toilets and efficient washers and dishwashers, save water and money. A 1.6-gallon-per-flush toilet, for example, can save thousands of gallons each year and energy saving washing machines use 35 to 50 percent less water and half as much energy.

Some water use is behavioral in nature: showers longer than five minutes, watering plants in the heat of the day, running the dishwasher when it's only half full, and leaving the water running while shaving or brushing teeth are all examples.

Q: How can homeowners save water?

A: Individuals can save water in a variety of ways:

Inside the home

- Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator rather than running the tap until the water gets cold.
- Replace five-gallon-per-flush toilets with standard 1.9 gallon-per-flush models. This can save an average of 18,600 gallons of water per year and about \$90.
- Fixing that leaky toilet can save as much as 500 gallons a day or as much as \$1,000 per year. Check toilets for



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leaks by putting a few drops of food coloring in your toilet tank. If the color begins to appear in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak.

- Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. One drop per second can add up to 2,700 gallons per year.
- Don't let the water run while brushing teeth or shaving. On average, you will save more than five gallons of water.
- Take shorter showers. A quick shower rather than a bath can save an average of 20 gallons of water. EPA recommends taking three- to five-minute showers.
- Use both sides of the sink when washing dishes: one side to wash and the other to rinse. Don't wash dishes with the water running.
- Garbage disposals use approximately 11.5 gallons of water per day. Try composting organic wastes instead.
- Use the dishwasher and washer only when you have full loads.
- Install flow restrictors in faucets.
- When cleaning a fish tank, use the drained water on plants. The water is rich in nitrogen and phosphorus, a healthy treat for plants.
- Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it such as watering a plant or cleaning around your home.

Outside the home

- Use mulch around trees to slow evaporation.
- Install covers on pools and spas and check for leaks around pumps.
- Water lawns and plants early in the morning or during the evening when there's less evaporation.

An average uncovered pool loses about an inch of water a week because of evaporation.

Source: Maryland Department of the Environment



- Water your lawn only when it needs it and adjust sprinklers so you're not watering the sidewalk or street. Also, aerated lawns absorb water better.
- Direct downspouts and other runoff toward shrubs, trees, and gardens.
- Plant drought-resistant trees and plants.
- Use a broom instead of a hose to clean sidewalks and driveways.
- Encourage your school system and local government to develop and promote a water conservation program among children and adults.

By following these simple suggestions, homeowners can conserve hundreds of gallons of water, saving money for themselves and

their communities, helping water supplies withstand drought, and lowering energy costs.

Q: Where can I get more information about conservation?

A: The National Environmental Services Center has devoted a section of their Web site to conservation. Visit www.nesc.wvu.edu/ndwc/ndwc_conservation.htm for information, articles, and products related to wise water use.

EPA's WaterSense program is a voluntary partnership that promotes water efficiency and fosters market demand for water-efficient products and services. Based on the successful Energy Star program, WaterSense seeks to raise awareness about the

importance of efficient water use and to ensure that consumers can easily identify products that meet EPA-standards. Learn more by visiting www.epa.gov/owm/water-efficiency/index.htm.

The American Water Works Association sponsors WaterWiser, a water efficiency resource. Learn more on the AWWA Web site at www.awwa.org/waterwiser/.

The H2Ouse Web site (www.h2ouse.org), created by the California Urban Water Conservation Council under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, shows homeowners various ways to save water around the home. The site's features include a home tour, demonstrating ways to conserve water in different parts of a house, a top five conservation tips section, a water budget calculator, and a garden guide that describes water conserving plants.

References

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On average, you will save more than five gallons of water if you turn off the water while brushing your teeth.

