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Cut your daily water usage in half easily

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NCR Today

Last year, UNICEF announced that humans need about five gallons of clean water a day to survive.

In the United States, we can easily use 400 gallons per household, per day ? two to three times as much water as other developed nations. With landscape irrigation estimated at more than 7 billion gallons per day, the per capita numbers get even crazier. Why? Much of our waste stems from unsustainable planning and policies, and a deep sense of entitlement: We deserve it, so it must happen.

We plant crops and erect cities on former deserts that require irrigation, which means diverting water from streams and rivers. Corn-based ethanol requires approximately 1,700 gallons of water for every gallon of fuel produced. Which means that even our green gasohol isn't water-efficient.

But it's not just big business and government that are to blame. We live in bigger houses than Europeans, drive bigger cars, have more clothes that need frequent washing in water-guzzling machines, and we pitch too many things into the trash instead of fixing them. All of this uses lots of water.

We can't hire a lobbyist to rewrite U.S. water policy. What we can do is make some important choices. All it takes is a little bit of thought.

The good news: You can cut your water use in half easily. You don't have to convert your toilet into a compost bin with a seat on it, not do without your daily shower. However, the average American uses more than 151 gallons of water per day. And there are a lot of Americans. In the spirit of a slightly more equitable use of resources, you can cut you water use dramatically.

If you want to start with baby steps, see what you can do about getting it down to 75. Once you realize how easy that can be, add on some other steps.

To help guide the transition, here are some explanations of where you're unknowingly hogging water, home hacks you can perform, and tips that might force you to alter your daily rituals, but won't have you living like a backwoodsman.

Toilet: 3.5 to 6 gallons per flush for a conventional toilet

Shower: 2.5 to 4 gallons per minute for a conventional shower head

Bath: Up to 60 gallons per bath based on standard tub size, full

Dishwasher: 4 gallons per load if it is Energy Star rated, 6 gallons without

Running faucet: 2 to 7 gallons per minute for a conventional faucet

Watering your lawn: 5 to 10 gallons per minute for a running hose.

For good tips on halving your daily water usage, see <http://www.good.is/post/good-guide-to-reducing-your-water-use-part-1-bathroom/> and <http://www.good.is/post/good-guide-to-reducing-your-water-use-part-3-kitchen/>

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