

GREYWATER IRRIGATION PREVENTS WATER AND MONEY FROM GOING DOWN THE DRAIN



Have you ever watched the spiraling bathwater go down the drain and wished it could be used to water the garden? Your wish for that “grey water” can be a reality! Since 2009 state plumbing codes have been changed to make greywater systems much easier and cost effective to install.

Greywater is wash and rinse water from washing machines, showers, bathtubs and bathroom sinks that is reusable out in your landscape. It is not water from kitchen sinks, dishwashers or toilets.

Greywater reuse will stretch your water dollar by lowering the amount of potable water needed out in the landscape. The most reliable, economical, and low-maintenance greywater systems require no pumps, filters, or storage tanks. Greywater can be piped directly to the landscape and be discharged into mulch basins around plants. Laundry-to-landscape systems use the clothes washer’s internal pump to push greywater to the landscape, whereas branched drain systems from bathroom sinks, showers, and tubs, rely on gravity to send greywater outside.

Mulch Magic! Greywater needs to be dispersed under at least two inches of cover and cannot be sprayed into the air. For both methods, adding wood chips to small dug out ditches around plants, acts as a treatment system that digests organic debris, soap, and any potential pathogens (bad bacteria). Landscapes that are flat or uphill from the greywater source may require an effluent pump system.

A Laundry-to-Landscape system does not require a permit to build if it meets code guidelines. It’s the easiest to install, change or remove. A family of four can produce about 120 gallons of laundry greywater per week with a high efficiency washer. That’s a lot of water that can go out to perennial plants, like bushes and fruit trees, as well as other edible plants (if they don’t touch the greywater). It’s a great feeling knowing that your washing machine is not only cleaning your clothes but also watering your plants! There are Laundry-to-Landscape classes and workshops every year through Cabrillo College Extension Program too!