Chapter 3

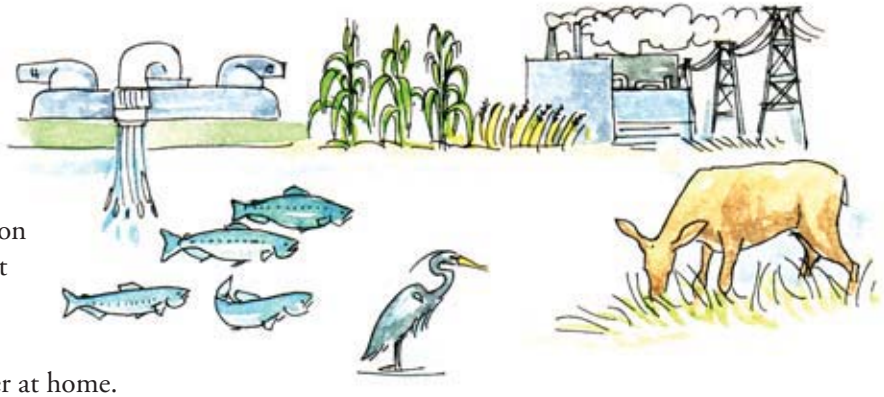
Water, Water Everywhere

Sound Water Use

Most of the Earth's water is not readily available for human use; 97% forms our oceans and 2% is frozen. We depend on the remaining 1% which is contained in streams, rivers, ponds, and in the groundwater.

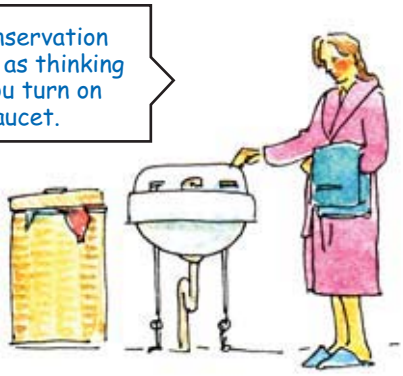
Saving water is as important as keeping it clean.

The Cape's water comes from its aquifer. Although the population grows and the need for services increases, the capacity of the aquifer remains finite. Yet we expect clean, clear water for drinking, irrigating our crops, and allowing fish and wildlife habitats to thrive.



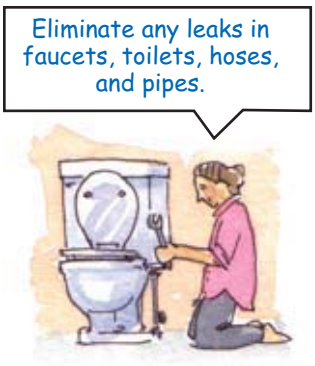
Using less water saves more than just the water; it also saves you money. Conserving water helps protect our ponds by reducing the demand on septic systems and sewage treatment plants. If your sewage treatment and maintenance costs are based on water consumption, water conservation can save you even more money. And saving hot water also means saving energy.

Every day, each person who is not already conserving water uses about 65 gallons of water at home. How much of this do you actually drink? Most of us can decrease water consumption in our homes by 15% to 20% without much discomfort or expense. All we have to do is acquire good water-use habits.



Less than 1% of the Earth's water is available for drinking.

Here are some tips to get you started...



Check for leaks. Check your water meter or your well pump while no water is being used. If the dial moves, or if the pump comes on, you have a leak. **A hole in your water line 1/32 of an inch in size wastes 750 gallons of water a day.**

Install low-flow faucet aerators. Your water pressure will seem stronger, but you'll actually be saving water while reducing flow as much as 50%.

...in the bathroom

- **Check toilets for leaks** by adding food coloring to the toilet tank. If color appears in the bowl, without flushing, there is a leak. A leaking toilet can waste 200 gallons of water a day without making a sound.
- **Flush only when necessary.** Each flush in older toilets uses about 6 gallons of water. Never use the toilet as a wastebasket.
- **For older toilets,** try filling one or two half-gallon plastic bottles and placing them in your tank to reduce water used for each flush. Or consider replacing the old one with a new, lower flow toilet which only uses 1-1/2 gallons per flush.

- **A shower or a bath?** Only the shortest shower saves more water than a partially filled tub. A full tub, however, can use 30-50 gallons of water: more than a short shower. Consider bathing small children together.
- **Install water-saving shower heads** or flow restrictors. Shower heads with an on/off valve are also available, allowing the water flow to be stopped and restarted without readjusting the temperature.
- **Don't let the water run** in the sink while shaving, brushing your teeth, or lathering your face and hands.

...in the kitchen

- **Fill your dishwasher.** Only use it when you have a full load. Use the cycles with the least number of washes and rinses. Buy detergents with zero phosphates.
- **Avoid running water** continuously when washing dishes in the sink. If possible, use two dishpans when washing dishes by hand: one to wash and one to rinse.
- **Wash dishes once a day.**
- **Keep a bottle** of drinking water in the refrigerator to avoid running the tap to get a glass of cool water.

- **Fill your washing machine.** Pre-soak clothes only when absolutely necessary. Set the water control level appropriately. Permanent press cycles may use an extra 10-20 gallons of water.
- **Buy a front loading washing machine** when you replace your present machine; it saves water and energy.
- **Avoid garbage disposals.** Many local towns prohibit garbage disposals because they use a great deal of water and can add grease and solids to your already hard-working sewage and septic systems.

...outdoors

- **Lawns – the Cape Cod way.** Plush, green lawns are not the norm here, and for good reason: they require too much water and fertilizer. It's better to decrease the size of your lawn and landscape with native, drought-resistant plants.
- **Water your garden only when necessary.** Water only in the early morning or at night to avoid rapid evaporation. Keep in mind that watering the sidewalk and street wastes water.
- **Use a broom, not a hose,** when cleaning driveways and walkways.

- **Water root areas of your plants,** preferably with a drip irrigation system which can save up to 60% over other watering techniques.
- **Wash your car only when necessary**, with a bucket and a hose with a shut-off nozzle. Use a high-pressure, low volume nozzle that has a pistol-grip.
- **Locate and label the master water supply valve** for ease of response in case of a major leak or broken pipe. Consider turning off your water and hot water heater when going on a trip.

.

The Chatham Water Department offers free information booklets.

See Chapters 8 and 9 on landscaping and lawns for more ideas

Cape Cod Neighbor

Eelgrass: Lean and Green

Eelgrass is often mistaken for a seaweed. Unlike seaweed, it has roots and even flowers underwater. One of the most important roles of eelgrass is to provide underwater shelter for species of fish and shellfish, especially bay scallops. Young scallops that attach themselves to the eelgrass leaves are less vulnerable to bottom predators like crabs and starfish. When eelgrass washes up on the beach, its brown piles provide cover for the small invertebrates that nourish wandering shorebirds. Decreased scallop populations followed the decline of eelgrass beds in the 1930s. While eelgrass populations have increased since then, they are now declining again due to poor water quality.