

Grey Water The Important Stuff



Grey water is household water that can be collected from the bathroom or laundry and reused in other areas of the home. It's a great way to make the most of our resources and save money. There are several ways to collect grey water and a few types of diversion systems. Some overviews are below with the key *do's and don'ts*.

What you can do...

You can use waste water from baths, showers, hand basins and washing machines as long as you have either not used any products, or use grey water safe products (low phosphorus). This water may be diverted onto lawns or gardens.

What you can NOT do...

You can NOT use grey water:

- For drinking, or pets or children to play with,
- To water vegetable gardens if the crop is to be eaten raw or uncooked,
- If it has faecal contamination (eg: water used to launder nappies),
- Store grey water for more than 24 hours (unless in a proper treatment unit),
- Or allow grey water flow from your property or enter storm water systems.

When using Grey Water

Rotate the areas watered with grey water. Wash your hands after handling grey water, stop using it during wet periods, stop using it if odours are generated and plants do not appear to be healthy. Always select bathroom and laundry products that are low in phosphate and other chemicals.

The Right Solution for You

Solutions vary significantly and depend very much on your particular situation, your budget, the type of house, where the plumbing is situated and a few other factors. Feel free to ask for some advice about your particular situation from your local grey water system providers or a qualified independent sustainability advisor.

Maintenance

Depending on which type of grey water system you are using, there will be a level of maintenance required. Always check the maintenance requirements when looking at grey water systems and keep them in good order.

Manual Grey Water Collection

Probably the simplest way to collect grey water is to use containers such as a bucket in the shower to collect water while waiting for the warm water to come through, through to bucketing out the bath water (take care with your back though). Or use a tub in the kitchen sink to rinse vegetables then pour the water onto the garden.

Simple Hose Diversion

Another simple way is to purchase a grey water reclaimer (less than \$10). This is a little rubber pipe with a funnel on the end. It fits into the external plumbing pipe and you attach a hose to it. You can then run the hose onto the garden or lawn. The water will then be caught in the pipe and diverted to the hose. Make sure that the hose is lower than the pipe outlet so that gravity can feed the water through.



Plumbed in Grey Water Systems

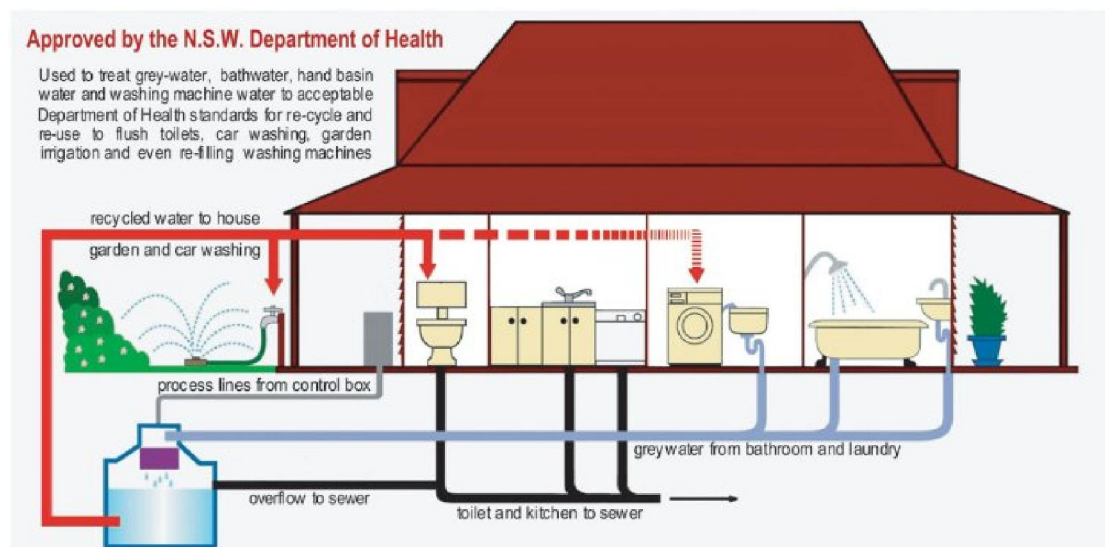
There are a variety of grey water systems that can be plumbed into your home. These need to be fitted by a licensed plumber (see the Green Plumbers for a good resource at www.greenplumbers.com.au). The system is plumbed into the waste water outlet and a diverter valve directs the waste water to the grey water unit.



This can be installed so that you can manually control when water goes to the grey water unit and when you want it to go to waste water. We suggest you go for the manual control option, it gives you more flexibility. You must also have the outlet water plumbed into an irrigation system to the garden. When the water in the grey water storage unit reaches a certain level the water is pumped out through the irrigation system to the garden. These are good systems but you must clean the filters regularly to ensure the system operates properly.

Permanent Grey Water Treatment System

These generally need to be plumbed in when the home is being built. Basically it takes the waste water from the bathrooms and laundry and puts it into a 'holding tank' (often underground). The water then goes through a few filtration processes and ends up in a 're-use' tank. This water is then re-used for toilet flushing, garden watering and often clothes washing. Whilst this is an effective way to re-use grey water it is the most costly solution to implement.



For any queries or additional information on this tip sheet please contact Green Moves Australia on (03) 9024 5515 or 1300 898 742

www.greenmoves.com.au
© Green Moves Aust (2011)

