

Greywater

Using greywater on your garden



Greywater (all non-toilet household wastewater) can be a good resource during times of drought and water restrictions, but its reuse can have health and environmental risks. However, there are simple steps you can take to harvest and use this resource without compromising public health, your household or the environment.

What is greywater?

Greywater is household wastewater from the bathroom, laundry and kitchen. Some greywater is suitable for reuse and some is not, depending on the source and levels of contamination. Toilet wastewater (blackwater) is not covered in this fact sheet.

Greywater sources

Greywater with low levels of contamination can be used on your garden. Consider the source of the greywater and follow some simple rules to ensure it is safe to use in the garden.

Bathroom greywater is suitable for use.

- Do use greywater friendly soaps, shampoos, toothpaste and cleaning products
- Don't use water from an infant's bath

Laundry greywater is suitable for use

- Water from the rinse cycle of your washing machine is better for your garden than water from the wash cycle because it will contain less detergent
- Use greywater friendly laundry detergents, which are pH neutral and low in phosphorus and sodium
- Don't use water from nappy washing

Kitchen greywater is not recommended for use.

- Water from the kitchen can be polluted with grease, oil and food particles. These can encourage the growth of harmful micro-organisms and damage greywater systems.

Greywater systems and permits

There are two options for treating greywater. The best option depends on how much greywater you produce, the size of your garden and your budget.

Greywater diversion systems

Simple systems that do not store greywater for more than 24 hours do not require a permit. Diversion systems do not treat greywater

Greywater treatment systems

Systems that collect, treat and reuse greywater do require a septic tank permit from council. To store greywater for more than 24 hours it must be treated to reduce bacteria and pollutants.

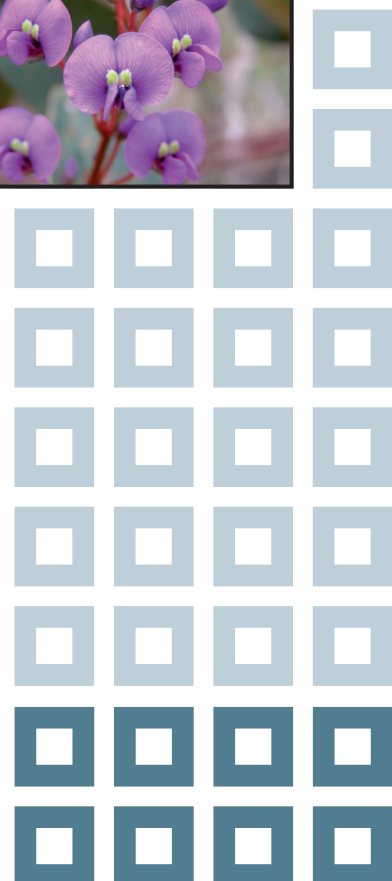
Treatment processes can include filtering, floatation, anaerobic or aerobic digestion, chemical removal of pollutants and disinfection. These systems must be Environment Protection Authority (EPA) approved and installed by a licensed plumber.

To confirm whether or not you will need a permit for your greywater system, contact the Health and Local Laws Unit on 9840 9333.

Environmental considerations

Greywater can harm the environment by:

- Overloading the garden with nutrients
- Permanently saturating the soil, preventing plants from growing and causing bad smells
- Overloading the garden with salt or chemical impurities and degrading the soil structure





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Minimising health risks

Use greywater carefully. Follow these simple rules to minimise the risks of transmitting disease or harming the environment:

Do

- Cover buckets of greywater - uncovered buckets are a drowning hazard for young children
- Keep people and pets away from areas where greywater is being applied
- Only use greywater on your garden if the plants remain healthy
- Alternate using greywater with other water, such as tank water

Don't

- Use greywater on food plants such as vegetable gardens
- Let greywater run off your property
- Over-saturate the ground with greywater
- Use sprinklers to distribute greywater

More Information

Contact the Health and Local Laws Unit,
Manningham Council - 9840 9333

Useful websites

www.manningham.vic.gov.au
(see How to Safely Reuse Domestic Greywater)

www.epa.vic.gov.au
(see Reuse Options for Household Wastewater in Water/Water reuse)

www.choice.com.au
(Choice reports on greywater systems and detergents)

www.sgaonline.org.au
(Sustainable Gardening Australia greywater information)

www.lanfaxlabs.com.au
(information about detergents)

www.yvw.com.au
(Yarra Valley Water)

www.ourwater.vic.gov.au
(Water Smart Gardens and Homes rebate scheme, Water Saver Garden Centres)

Manningham City Council

699 Doncaster Road, Victoria 3108 PO Box 1, Doncaster Victoria 3108

t (03) 9840 9333 f (03) 9848 3110 e manningham@manningham.vic.gov.au

www.manningham.vic.gov.au

