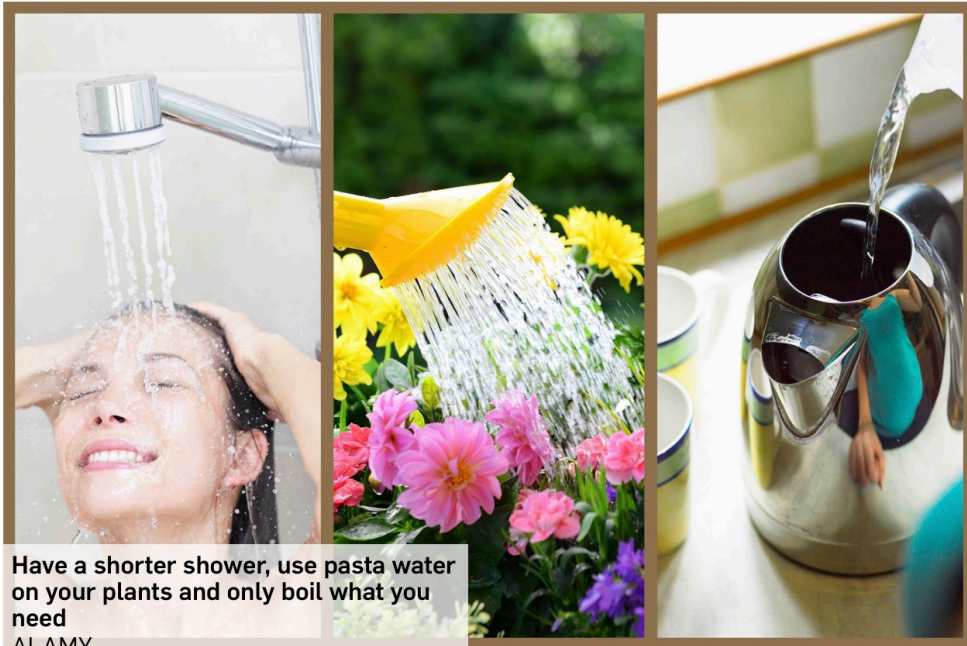


12 ways to save water this summer

Boil only the water you need in the kettle, avoid baths and sing a four-minute song while you shower



Have a shorter shower, use pasta water on your plants and only boil what you need

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Georgia Lambert

As the mercury rose in thermometers across much of the country this week, children could be heard giggling as they played in paddling pools and ran in and out of sprinklers while gardeners fretted about a hosepipe ban.

Whenever we have a hot, dry summer there are the same debates: should we empty our bath water onto the tomato plants or sneak out in the dead of night to water the lawn? Should we share a bath or opt for short, sharp — and cold — Wim Hof-style showers?

This year it is more urgent than ever that we conserve water with temperatures tipping above 40C. “If we don’t do anything to reduce demand and if we don’t create new reservoirs, England could be in a deficit of about four billion litres a day,” Nathan Richardson, head of strategy and policy at the campaigning organisation Waterwise, warned this week. So how can we save water this summer?

1. Re-use rainwater

Invest in a water butt. Richardson says: “Re-using rainwater is not only free of

charge but it is a sustainable and energy-efficient way of maintaining a garden. If you fill your watering can or hose up with the water coming into the house, you are essentially filling it up with drinking water that could have been used for other purposes.”

2. Fit a water meter

Martin Lewis of MoneySavingExpert recommends fitting a water meter “if there are more bedrooms in your home than people, or the same number”. Check how much you can save with a meter by using the Consumer Council for Water’s calculator (ccwater.org.uk).

3. Take a (short) shower

While showering may be a more eco-friendly alternative to bathing, if you stay in there for a long time, you might as well have had a good soak in the bubbles. Showers use about 10 litres of water a minute and can rack up your heating bill, so swap to an aerated shower head to cut water use by half, and save on water and energy costs. Keep your time in the shower brief by playing Spotify’s Songs to Sing in the Shower playlist, chock-full of beltters that last for about four minutes each.

4. If it’s yellow, let it mellow

Households account for 55 per cent of all water used in the UK and all of that water is of drinking quality, yet 35 per cent of it is flushed down the



toilet, according to the *Greening Your Home* report by Cambridge city council. Before you flush, consider abiding by the age-old phrase “if it’s yellow, let it mellow; if it’s brown, flush it down”.

5. Fix that leaky tap

Apart from being wildly irritating, a dripping tap or shower head can waste a lot of water. “There are many easy ways renters and homeowners can save water to reduce their bills. It goes without saying that it’s also worth investing in fixing any leaking taps, which could save you a huge amount of money in the long run,” Pikel, a holiday rental insurance specialist, points out.

6. Eco-friendly settings

TikTok’s [@thatpropertyguy](#) is one of many social content creators who are helping promote the simple message that we should wash our clothes in larger loads and use the eco settings on washing machines and dishwashers — and while it’s sunny, dry your clothes outside rather than switch on a dryer. Some energy companies charge less if you use appliances during off-peak times, if you’re on a specific tariff such as Economy 7.

7. Keep a tall jug in your bathroom

While you wait for your taps to run hot or cold, let the water run into a jug or a watering can for use later rather than



Consider investing in a water butt
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down the plughole. This, along with using a tumbler of water instead of the tap when brushing your pearly whites, is a family favourite in our household.

8. Tea for one

Next time you are filling the kettle for a brew, only boil what you need. Afterwards, turn the kettle off at the wall to avoid draining power on standby. British Gas revealed that by doing this, households could save an average of £147 on electricity bills each year.

9. Buy organic-certified cotton

While taps and toilets may be the obvious culprits for the water crisis, there is hidden water in everything we buy. Cotton, for example, is one of the thirstiest crops and it takes about 2,700 litres of water — or 34 baths — to make one T-

shirt. To determine which brands to buy and which to steer clear of, use the Good on You brand directory to see your options (directory.goodonyou.eco).

10. Take extra care when watering your plants

The best time to water your garden is in the evening, advises Morris Hankinson, managing director of Hopes Grove Nurseries. “By doing so, the plants will have time to absorb water through their roots instead of evaporating first.” Then, “water well, not just a splash — bigger plants like shrubs and hedges need a good drench once or twice a week, rather than a splash every day”. Remember too that plants can be watered with shower, bath, kitchen and washing machine water (from rinse cycles). Save your pasta water too: not only does the



starchiness help to thicken sauces and pesto, when cooled, non-salty waters are an excellent way to feed plants.

11. Mulch flowerbeds

Morris recommends mulching flower beds and containers with bark chips, old newspapers, straw or lawn mowings to keep the roots

cool and to save water. Climbers like clematis or passion flowers will be overjoyed with a paving slab covering their roots.

12. Invest in drought-friendly plants

Don't do what I did and buy a tomato plant if you're on a budget and have limited space. My water usage has shot up

since planting it and for eight baby tomatoes and a whiff of the Mediterranean, I'm not convinced it has been worth the effort. If I had just invested in a *Vitis vinifera* 'Johanniter' (a white grape vine) or a drought-resistant plant like euphorbia, which likes basking in the blazing sun, I would have been far better off. ■

