

# What is graywater?

Graywater is untreated wastewater from bathtubs, showers, sinks, clothes washing machines and laundry sinks. Graywater does not include wastewater from toilets, kitchen sinks, dishwashers, or laundry water from soiled diapers.

# Why is graywater beneficial?

Using graywater reduces your reliance on potable water for outdoor irrigation. It can also save money. For example, based on Helix Water District pricing, the savings for a family of four that produces 160 gallons/day of graywater ranges from \$240 – \$400 annual savings, depending upon the pricing tier. Relatively simple systems that do not require extensive engineering can have short payback periods.

## Resources For More Information

**County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health**  
[sdcounty.ca.gov](http://sdcounty.ca.gov)  
PHONE: 858-495-5572 or 858-565-5173

**California Urban Water Conservation Council**  
[h2ouse.org](http://h2ouse.org)  
PHONE: 916-552-5885

**San Francisco Graywater Design Manual**  
[sfwater.org](http://sfwater.org)

**Using Graywater in your home landscape**  
[water.ca.gov](http://water.ca.gov)  
PHONE: 916-327-1620

**City of San Diego Development Services**  
[sandiego.gov](http://sandiego.gov)  
PHONE: 619-446-5000

**San Diego County Water Authority**  
[watersmartsd.org](http://watersmartsd.org)  
PHONE: 858-522-6600

**San Diego Sustainable Living Institute**  
[sdsustainable.org](http://sdsustainable.org)  
PHONE: 619-884-7749

**California Department of Housing and Community Development, Emergency Rulemaking**  
[hcd.ca.gov](http://hcd.ca.gov)  
PHONE: 916-263-7400

**Regulations**  
[sdcounty.ca.gov](http://sdcounty.ca.gov)  
PHONE: 858 495-5572

# Gray Water



## INFO



...MAKE  
EVERY  
DROP COUNT

Brought To You By:



**CITY OF LA MESA**  
JEWEL of the HILLS

Environmental Sustainability Commission



## How A Graywater System Works

Graywater systems directly reuse “wastewater” to irrigate your plants. Bleaches and certain detergents and soaps can be harmful to plants.

## What kind of plants can I irrigate with graywater?

Graywater can be used to irrigate fruit trees, ornamental trees, shrubs, groundcover and lawns. Graywater should not be used in vegetable gardens where the food is a root crop or touches the ground surface. Graywater can not use spray irrigation.

### PRODUCT INGREDIENTS TO AVOID

(In Part From San Francisco’s graywater design manual [BIT: bit.ly/sfgraywater](http://bit.ly/sfgraywater))

**Salt & sodium compounds:** Salts can build up in the soil and prevent plants from taking up water. Over time, salt build-up can kill plants. **Boron or borax:** Boron is a plant micronutrient, but once plants have their boron needs met, it quickly becomes a microtoxin that damages plants. Boron is a hormone disruptor to people, and it is a common element in ecological detergents. To avoid boron poisoning of your plants, do not use any soap or detergent that contains boron or borax. **Chlorine bleach:** Chlorine bleach kills soil microorganisms and can damage your plants. Do not use it in a graywater system! Hydrogen peroxide bleach can be used as an alternative. **Cleaners:** Many cleaners have high levels of salts, contain harmful chemicals, and can be very basic (alkaline). In general, cleaning products made from vinegar are better for plants. Use cleansers sparingly. **Personal care products:** If you are interested in learning more about the ingredients in your shampoos, conditioners, and deodorants, visit <http://cosmeticdatabase.org> or <http://ewg.org>, on-line information sites that allow you to investigate what is in your products.

A graywater system is an effective way to reduce your household outdoor irrigation consumption



## Do I need a permit?

Construction permits are not generally required for graywater systems that collect water from a clothes washer only, if no modifications to the plumbing system are required and no pumps or valves are proposed as part of the graywater system. This type of system must still meet the design and construction standards found in the regulations. All other graywater systems require a construction permit.

## Who regulates graywater?

Regulation for the design, construction, and use of graywater systems can be found in Chapter 16 of the 2013 California Plumbing Code (CPC). Your graywater system must comply with these codes, as well as codes enacted by your local municipality; some municipalities have adopted regulations more stringent than the CPC. A copy of Chapter 16 of the CPC can be found at: [www.iapmo.org/2013californiaplumbingcode/chapter16.pdf](http://www.iapmo.org/2013californiaplumbingcode/chapter16.pdf)  
Or visit [La Mesa Building Division](#)