



City of Sierra Madre

Development Services Department

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Graywater Reuse – A Source of Water

Sierra Madre's primary water source is in decline and residents are required to conserve water. California is facing one of the most severe droughts on record. Reusing graywater is a way to conserve our water supply, save money, reduce your reliance on potable water for outdoor irrigation, and reduces flows to our wastewater system.

What is Graywater?

Graywater is untreated household wastewater generated from hand washing, laundry and bathing. This wastewater can be diverted from the sewer to irrigate outdoor plants and landscape. Graywater does not include any water from toilets, kitchen sinks, dishwashers or washing machines laundering soiled diapers.

How Graywater Systems Work:

A graywater system is a type of plumbing system which directly reuses wastewater to irrigate your plants. Do not use any detergents or bleaches in your sink, bath and laundry that may ultimately be harmful to your plants. To further ensure safety, graywater cannot be used on the edible portions of vegetables and must be used for sub-surface irrigation in order to reduce human contact or ponding. You cannot store graywater, only divert the amount needed to water your garden. All systems must be installed and maintained according to Chapter 16A of the California Plumbing Code.

Types of Graywater Systems:

There are three types of graywater systems that can be installed in your home that vary in complexity, volume of water produced and permitting requirements. In order to determine which system is right for you, you need to know your irrigation needs, including yard size, soil type, groundwater level and budget. The easiest, most low-tech system uses a washing machine and gravity to move laundry water directly out to the garden – these "laundry-to-landscape" systems do not require a permit as long as no pump or surge tank is used and as long as all code requirements are met. For simple and complex systems which involve altering plumbing, including use of surge tanks and pumps, a permit is required.

For graywater systems which require a permit, the City of Sierra Madre has authorized a 30% reduction of the permit fee to help offset costs and to promote water conservation practices. If you or your qualified professional have any questions on the installation of a graywater system in your home, contact the Development Services Department at (626) 355-7138.