

**The average daily water consumption per person in Ireland is over 148 litres! Think of the size of 148 litre bottles of water! In a typical home, only 4% of water is used for drinking and cooking! Reuse water as much as you can.**

## In The Garden



**Use a bucket or watering can instead of a hose.** A running hose will use about 9 litres of water per minute.



Watering the garden can use up to 700 litres. It is easy to **install a water barrel** onto the down pipe to collect rain. This water can also be used to wash the car.



**You don't need to water your grass, it will quickly recover!** Cut less often, and raise the lawnmower blades. Longer grass means less evaporation. Leave the clippings on the grass. This will protect the grass and help hold onto moisture.



**Compost your kitchen and garden waste.** Compost is a natural fertiliser and keeps the soil moist. And it cuts down significantly on the waste that goes to landfill - organic waste makes up about one third of household waste.



**Water in the early morning or evening when it is cooler**, and don't water on windy days, too much evaporates.



**Place a layer of mulch or a tightly woven mesh material around the plants.** Water can seep into the soil underneath these barriers but the sun can't get through, so less weeds grow, and those that do are easier to remove. Using mulch such as wood chips, bark or gravel will help prevent water evaporation and is especially valuable for shrubs, flowerbeds and new plantings.



Instead of applying pesticides, which can leach into the ground water and wash into surface water, you can **use other ways to control insect pests.**

**Encourage friendly pest-eating insects** by leaving logs or other debris in secluded areas, where friendly insects can breed.

**Alternate rows of different kinds of plants.** Insects that like carrots, for example, may not spread to all your carrot plants if a row of peas are between them.

**Use plants that repel insects** around your garden. For example planting garlic among vegetables helps keep away Japanese beetles, aphids, the vegetable weevil and spider mites. Planting basil near tomatoes repels tomato hornworms.

# VOICE

voice of Irish concern  
for the environment

Voice of Irish Concern for the Environment

9 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2

Tel (01) 642 5741

Email [info@voiceireland.org](mailto:info@voiceireland.org) · Web [www.voiceireland.org](http://www.voiceireland.org)

## Sponsored by



Donegal  
County Council



Fingal  
County Council



Mayo  
County Council



Meath  
County Council



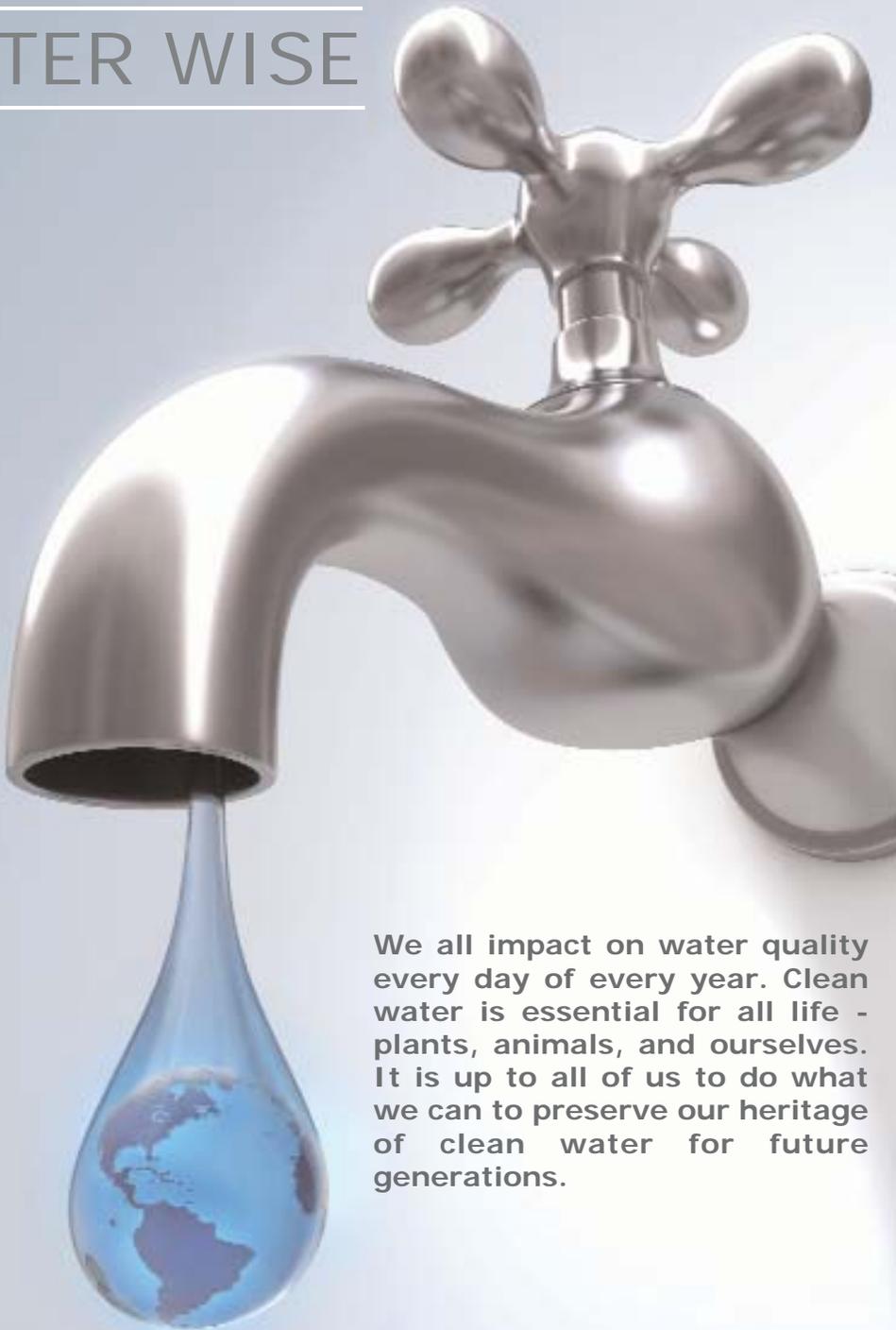
Monaghan  
County Council

## Supported by



The Environmental Partnership Fund  
Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

# WATER WISE



We all impact on water quality every day of every year. Clean water is essential for all life - plants, animals, and ourselves. It is up to all of us to do what we can to preserve our heritage of clean water for future generations.

Water is Precious - Let's Conserve it

# Water is Precious

**Even though Ireland receives an abundance of rain each year, we still need to conserve this precious resource.**

## **Why?**

Because before we can drink it, all water must first be treated to drinking water standards. Then this water must also be distributed to us.

## **What are the threats?**

In Ireland, the main threat to water quality comes from nutrients released into water, such as phosphate and nitrates. These are food for very tiny organisms called algae, which grow very rapidly when too much nutrients reach water, particularly in summer.

Often called “algal blooms” the growth of algae can be so rapid that they use up all the oxygen in the water, reducing its capacity to support fish and other aquatic life. The lack of oxygen can suffocate fish, who need some oxygen in water to breathe. Also, some of the algal blooms can be toxic and pose a danger if humans and animals come into contact with them.

**Where do these nutrients come from?** There are a number of sources including domestic, agricultural, and industrial. But the good news is that we can all play our part in protecting our rivers, lakes, groundwater and coastal waters.

Less than 1% of the world's fresh water is easily accessible for human use. In Ireland we have access to treated water, but globally, 1.1 billion people (one person in six) does not have access to clean water.





## What you can do!

### In The Kitchen

 **Wash vegetables, fruit and salad, using a basin** rather than letting the tap run. Use the water for your plants!

 **Reduce the use of your washing machine and dishwasher, use only when full**, a typical washing machine uses up to 45 litres of water, and a dishwasher up to 20 litres.

 **Dishwasher detergents:** contain phosphates! Use economically!

 **Washing machine detergents:** check containers, if there are more than 5% phosphates choose a different brand, or try switching instead to products that contain zeolites.

 **Washing up liquids:** contains generally little phosphate, but there may be other elements that affect water quality, so use sparingly, or try washing up liquids that use biodegradable ingredients.

 **Paints and solvents:** never ever flush unused household chemicals, paints or solvents down the drain. Even very small amounts can contaminate large amounts of water. Store in sealed containers until an environmentally safe disposal system is available in your area.

### In The Bathroom

 **Know how to turn off your water supply!** This could save thousands of litres of water and damage to your home in the event of a pipe burst.

 **Fix leaky taps or water pipes:** even a small drip from a tap can waste as much as 75 litres of water a day.

 **Turn taps off:** leaving the tap on while brushing your teeth or washing your hands can pump up to 4 litres of water down the drain each time.

 **Take a shower:** A shower uses much less water and energy than a bath. A shower uses approximately 40 litres, while taking a bath uses up to 100 litres. But, if it's a power shower, reduce the time you spend in the shower. A power shower can use over 125 litres in less than five minutes!

 **When showering,** decrease the flow to achieve a comfortable temperature instead of increasing the hot or cold water.

 **Consider purchasing LowFlow toilets** that can reduce indoor water use by 20 percent.

 **Install a brick in the toilet cistern** to reduce water needed for each flushing

 Keep the use of bleach to a minimum.



# Let's conserve it!

## Septic Tanks

Septic tank systems (septic tank and percolation area), properly installed and maintained, can be satisfactory where suitable subsoil conditions exist.

But according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a significant number of septic tank systems do not function properly. This is mainly because they are poorly constructed, installed, operated, or located in areas with unsuitable sub-soils, or inadequate percolation.

### Do's and Dont's

-  Do consult the EPA Manual, Treatment Systems for Single Houses before constructing a septic tank.
-  Do construct tank and percolation area in accordance with regulations.
-  Do de-sludge when necessary.
-  Don't site a septic tank or percolation area within 10 metres of a watercourse or stream, or 50 metres of a lake.
-  Don't allow pesticides, paints, thinners, solvents, disinfectants, or household hazardous substances to discharge into the tank.
-  Don't allow rainwater to enter the tank.

## Alternatives

### Constructed Wetlands

Wetlands are areas with high water tables, which have aquatic vegetation or plants such as reeds. Primary treatment is by a septic tank prior to discharge to a constructed wetland.

### Compost Toilets

These toilets require no water and turn the waste into compost, which can be re-used in the garden. Of course they only treat solid waste and must be used in conjunction with some alternative treatment for other wastewater.

### Filter Systems

If subsoil conditions are less than favourable it may be possible to use a filter system. These include intermittent soil filters, sand filters, peat filters and other filters using materials such as plastic foam filters and geosynthetic strips.

### Mechanical Aeration Systems

Biofilm aerated (BAF), rotating biological contactor (RBC), sequencing batch reactors (SBR). Planning permission would be required and in a vast majority of cases subsoil irrigation would be required by the Local Authority.

**In all these cases professional advice should be sought and consultation with the Local Authority is necessary.**