

Saving water in Auckland: an ordinary family's success story

With relatively little effort and investment this family of four saved significantly against their water bills.

Lois' story

Our family (two adults and two kids) has always been relatively careful water users. Sure, my husband takes fairly long showers and the kids have a bath occasionally, but we're water conscious and it pays off – literally.

The national average for water consumption is 241 litres per person, per day. That's a lot! Last year our family used about half of this – 130 litres per day each. Because our water is metered, it also meant our water bills were considerably lower than the average for a similar household.

Reducing water consumption is simple. We never leave the tap running, even when brushing our teeth – it's amazing how much water can trickle down the drain if the tap is left on, even for a minute. We also put a brick in our old full-flush toilet; this meant that less water was needed to fill the cistern. And, when our old shower head gave up, we replaced it with a water-efficient option, which cost no more than a 'regular' fitting and still gives a great shower.

Apart from vegetables, our garden is planted in natives appropriate for our climate, so doesn't need watering at all. We only water the veg garden for the peak summer season, and always in the evening so the water can soak in, and no more than twice a week.

Last year, however, we got really serious. When we renovated our bathroom we installed a water-efficient washing machine and super-efficient dual-flush toilet (which uses 4.5 litres for a full flush and 3 litres for a half flush). The results of these two simple changes are remarkable – our water consumption has dropped by a further 50 litres per person *each day*.



We are now an efficient 85 litres per person, per day household. We're saving \$286.16 annually since our renovations (in 2008 terms – a lot more now!). Based on the cost of our water bills the new toilet will have paid for itself in a year. (At \$299 it was the same price as an inefficient model.) The washing machine cost about \$150 more than a cheaper, standard model, but will pay for itself in six months and continue to return these savings for years to come.

And we don't even have a rainwater tank! A rainwater tank can supply almost half of a home's water needs. Rainwater is easily collected and ideal for all non-drinking purposes. (Just 3% of the water piped into our homes is used for drinking!)

So before you complain about your next water bill, turn off the tap and chuck a brick in your cistern! Better still, when renovating or replacing old appliances and tapware, consider water-efficient options.

For more information:

- See Fact sheets on
 - Rainwater systems
 - Using less water