

Information sheet

Greywater Systems in Victoria

DEFINITION

Greywater is typically water from baths, showers, hand basins and washing machines (preferably the final rinse water only). It does not include water from the toilet. Water from kitchen sinks and dishwashers is also technically greywater, however the high concentration of food wastes and chemicals mean that it is less suitable for re-use.

Greywater Systems

There are three broad categories of greywater re-use system as follows:

Diversion only systems are simple, can often be self installed and generally require little maintenance. They involve intercepting or “diverting” the water along a pipeline and directing it onto the garden, generally by gravity.

Diversion and filtration systems have a filter mechanism located outside the house. These filters strain out the hair and other little bits that go down the drain, however the diversion process is the same.

Diversion and treatment systems treat the greywater and allow it to be stored for more than 24 hours. They are more complex and require more space. They are also more expensive and require professional installation and maintenance, but are eligible for a \$500 Government rebate. Treated greywater can be used safely in more direct irrigation applications including dripper lines as well as inside the home for toilet flushing and possibly laundry washing.

For a full range of greywater systems and accessories visit the savewater!® product section at www.savewater.com.au

Permits and the Legal Position

- A household **greywater diversion system** is not subject to any permits in Victoria, but the householder is liable if the greywater threatens public health. This includes ensuring that greywater does not run off your property into the street or adjoining properties.
- Diverted greywater can only be re-used for garden irrigation via a below ground seepage pipe, ie. not sprinklers.
- **Greywater treatment systems** must be of a type approved by the EPA and installation and operation are subject to local council and water authority approval.
- Any permanent greywater system must be installed by a licensed plumber.

Approvals and Advice on Greywater

May be sought from:

- Environment Protection Authority – www.epa.vic.gov.au
- Local council – find your council at www.mav.asn.au
- Local water authority – find your service provider at www.vicwater.org.au - click on Water Industry
- Licensed plumbers with additional accreditation in water conservation systems: GreenPlumbers – www.greenplumbers.com.au

Costs

Greywater systems vary greatly in price, depending on the complexity of the system and the intended end-use for the water.

A simple diverter can cost under \$100, while complete treatment systems can cost several thousand dollars (but are also eligible for a state government rebate).

Rebate

A permanent greywater tank system is eligible for a \$500 rebate under the Victorian Government's Watersmart Gardens and Homes Rebate Scheme.

To be eligible, a licensed plumber must be used for installation, supported by a certificate from the Plumbing Industry Commission. The current rebate is available until 30 September 2009.

GREYWATER DOS AND DON'TS

Do

- Use **low phosphorus detergents**.
- Diverted greywater (untreated) should only be **used on the garden**.
- Apply diverted greywater to the garden by a **below ground seepage pipe**. This will reduce human exposure to the water.
- Use greywater **only during prolonged warm, dry period**, and use only what you need to meet the plants' water requirements.
- Ensure greywater is diverted to the sewer **during wet periods**.
- Install a diversion system that is **'fail-safe'**, where the greywater will automatically be diverted to the sewer if the greywater system blocks or malfunctions.
- Stop using greywater **if you smell odours** and your **plants do not appear to be healthy**.
- Wash your hands after watering with greywater and after gardening in greywater irrigated areas.
- **Use less fertiliser** when irrigating with greywater.
- Ensure greywater does not contaminate any source of drinking water: Extreme care must be taken to **ensure there is no cross-connection** between the greywater reuse system and the drinking water supply.

Don't

- Never water vegetable gardens if the crop is to be eaten raw or uncooked.
- Never use greywater that has **faecal contamination**, for example, wastewater used to wash nappies.
- Never store untreated greywater for **more than 24 hours**.
- **Never drink greywater** or allow children or pets to drink or play with greywater.
- Never allow greywater to flow **beyond your property boundary** or enter stormwater systems.
- Do not use kitchen wastewater (including dishwashers) - **it contains highly concentrated food wastes and chemicals** that are not readily broken down by soil organisms.
- **Do not allow greywater to pool or stagnate** as this will attract insects and rodents, which may transmit disease.
- **Do not allow greywater to come into contact with skin**.

Disclaimer: While savewater![®] has attempted to ensure that all the above information is accurate, it cannot accept responsibility for any loss you may suffer by relying on it.

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Further information on savewater![®]

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