

WATER SAVING ADVICE

Many parts of South Africa have been harshly affected by drought. It is imperative for all to do what they can to save water and this is something that should be taken into consideration when planning a kitchen, choosing new appliances and adapting your current kitchen.

When choosing your appliances, looking at water and energy consumption should be a foremost consideration. The top manufacturers of washing machines and dishwashers have invested heavily in developing products that are water wise. There are currently dishwashers on the market that are controlled by sensors that measure how full the machine is and how heavily spoiled the items are and adjust the water usage and length of cycle accordingly. Some machines have an inbuilt water recycling system whereby water from the final rinse cycle is filtered and stored for use in the next prewash cycle. Many people think that a dishwasher is a water wasting luxury but not only does it offer a more hygienic wash than hand washing but most modern machines use less than the approximate 20 litres of water that is used in a hand wash and rinse. Some on their eco cycle use as little as 6-10 litres.

Washing machines too, have advanced. Many machines now come with drums adapted to weigh the load and adjust the water usage and cycle length accordingly.

Water usage should also be a consideration when making your choice of sink. The debate on whether to choose a sink with a deep or shallow bowl has long been a question. A shallow bowl will enforce less water usage. If opting for a deeper bowl to better accommodate large pots and pans it is vital that you are disciplined enough to not fill them to capacity unless absolutely necessary.

Specialised taps are also available on the market that assist in regulating the flow of water to reduce wastage. Others that are a hybrid of tap and kettle supply boiling water without the wastage of steam. Ensuring that your taps are correctly installed, don't leak and are properly closed off and not allowed to drip, is one of the most basic ways of conserving water. It is also possible to upgrade your existing tap. The addition of a tap aerator can be a DIY job and can turn your old tap into a more water efficient one.

Although the geyser supplies the whole home and not just the kitchen it is an important consideration.

You should consider the pressure valve on your geyser. A 400kPa valve rather than a 600kPa valve will assist you in saving water as it pushes the water through your taps at a lower rate reducing wastage and basic consumption.

But the most important decision you can make is to install a grey water system. There are a variety of types on the market as well as DIY options online. Most water from the kitchen can be reused in some way but there are important factors to bear in mind. Laundry water contains soaps, detergents, bleach, water softeners, lint, dirt and human matter. If you are opting to use the water from your washing machine as grey water you should filter the water as part of the system and look to switch to biodegradable detergents. Remember that soaps affect the pH balance of the water so the water should be directed to plants that are not acid loving, avoiding ferns, rhododendrons and berry plants. It is possible to install systems that are straight laundry to landscape. Although most people believe this will not harm your washing machine nor affect its guarantee this should be checked with the manufacturer first. If using this type of grey water system you must be sure that your washing machine's pump is operating properly and ensure that you are not putting any more strain on the pump than recommended by the manufacturer. It is best not to pump the water uphill and not to let it travel more than 15 meters.

Sink water can also be reused but also only if the detergent is biodegradable. You must also ensure that the water does not contain grease, blood, pesticides and oils if you are wanting to use it for irrigation purposes. The dishwasher poses the biggest problem when it comes to greywater. This is because dishwasher detergents are typically high in salt and this is very harmful to plants and soil. If possible you should find a dishwasher detergent with low salt and boron. If you can't find such a detergent then the water should only be used for plants that are highly salt tolerant.

Saving water in your kitchen will take a little time, effort and initially expense but it is a vital step to looking after our future water sources.

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