

save money, help the environment

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For The Tennessean

Sometimes the simplest things go overlooked.

Take water, for instance.

How close an eye do you keep on water consumption? Cutting back on water usage is one of the most effective ways to positively affect the environment.

Your water bill may not be too high on your list of priorities, but with 34 billion gallons pumped daily into American homes, according to Metro Water Services' Web site, cutting back on water consumption is definitely worth a second look.

Whether you're a natural penny pincher or simply want to extend a helping hand without taking too much of a break from your daily grind, here are a few simple tips from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to make your home a little more green:

- Save up to 2,700 gallons of water a year by repairing the average drippy faucet.

- Cut back on watering the lawn, which adds up to more than half of a household's water use. You can save 750 to 1,500 gallons per month by using a water hose (rather than fine-mist sprinklers that allow water to evaporate before it hits the dirt) for shorter periods throughout the week. Longer lawn baths just mean a mushy yard, not a healthier one.

- Wait to run the washing machine and dishwasher until you have a full load, which can conserve 300 to 800 gallons per month. Better yet, try running your clothes and flatware through a light rinse cycle.

- Don't leave the hose running while washing your car and save 150 gallons each time. Just keep a bucket handy and give your car a quick hose-off at the end.

Sam Davidson, founder of www.CoolPeopleCare.org, a local grassroots Web site that promotes environmental consciousness, says that even the simplest chores can be a conservation effort. One of his suggestions is simply cutting your shower a minute or two short to save an extra 5-10 gallons of water a day.

Davidson says he has friends who even turn off the water while lathering up. While you may not want to go that far, he emphasizes that making a habit of reducing time in the shower is a good start.

"If you do that every day for a year, you can save thousands of gallons of water without much effort," Davidson said. "Every little bit helps."