

Translation from Flemish to French of the article "Hoe kunnen we water besparen? From the newspaper De Standaard of 16 August 2019.

How can we save water?

114 liters. Every Flemish uses so much water every day. It's a lot. We know that we have to turn off the tap by brushing our teeth. But what can we do to save water?

Leaks. "A leaky faucet wastes four liters of water an hour. A toilet bowl malfunctioning 25 liters per hour. If you do not detect these leaks in time, it can cost several hundred euros", says Kathleen De Schepper, spokesperson for De Watergroep. Such a leak can often be seen with the naked eye, but sometimes it can also be underground. "Reduced pressure on the pipes and wet areas on the walls or ceiling indicate loss of water and check your water level regularly.

Reduce the water used by the toilet. "Anyone with old toilets can put a full bottle in the tub. This way, you use less water if you flush the toilet", explains Marjolein Vanoppen, scientist in water sciences (UGent). Those who can, should use the small flush button. "You use half as much water. Get in the habit of using it. If necessary, stick a sticker on it to remind you", she says. Or a more extreme alternative: do not shoot. "It's a grandmother's advice. You can also wait for everyone to spend the morning before hunting.

Recover the lost water. Much of the water we use is simply sent to the sewer. "For example, washing vegetables. Try to collect this water and give it to your plants", says Vanoppen. The same thing applies to the shower. Many will just let the cold water flow until it is completely warmed up. Put a bucket in the shower. You will be surprised at the amount of water collected.

Pay attention to your virtual water consumption. Is it better to have potatoes or rice? What you do at home to save water is certainly good. But we must not forget our indirect water consumption. It is water that we do not see flowing before our eyes. Hence the term "virtual" water, explains Patrick Meire, professor in water management (UA). "For example: to grow a tomato, you need a lot of water, but you do not see it when you buy the tomato. You can also save water in your food choice. For example, producing one kilogram of potatoes requires 287 liters of water, compared with 2,497 liters for one kilo of rice. This does not just apply to food. It also takes a lot of water for other products we buy. For example, a single cotton shirt requires 2,495 liters.

Collect rain water. Anyone with a rainwater recovery well can make good use of it. "Not only the toilets, but also your washing machine can work with rainwater. And it's perfect for cleaning", says Vanoppen. But in this case, the surplus must also be closely monitored, says Professor Meire. "When the well is full, the excess water usually enters the sewers. So we lost that. Try to make sure that the excess water can go into the ground or into a canal. This is how groundwater is reconstituted".

Choose the right plants. Plants naturally need water, but not all species have the same thirst. "In our garden we have plants that we like, but they often need a lot of water. Choose plants that require less water and are better able to withstand the heat", says Gerard van der Linden from Wageningen University. This does not mean that we have to fill all our cacti gardens; they will not survive the winter. But plants that occur in a Mediterranean climate can help. In addition,

the grass for example. Some species require much less water and do not brown so quickly in summer.

Do not spoil the new plants too much. When we buy a new plant, we often give it a lot of water. Your plant gets used to it and adapts to it. "If you are more economical with water at first, your plant will grow longer and deeper roots and be better able to counteract drought", Van der Linden says. The time of day when you water is also important. "Do not just adjust your spray system three times a week, but water the plants when they need them, preferably not at the hottest time of the day, as it evaporates far too quickly."