

To help protect the state's water supplies, changes have been made to the laws surrounding the use of greywater.

The *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002* outlines the conditions for using greywater legally in Queensland to ensure public health and the local environment are protected.

Greywater is a great way to save water, but it must be used responsibly.

› What is greywater?

Greywater is wastewater from the:

- ◆ shower
- ◆ bath or internal spa bath (**not** external spas or pools)
- ◆ wash basins
- ◆ laundry.

› What is the difference between untreated and treated greywater?

Untreated greywater can be processed through a greywater treatment plant to improve the quality of the water. A greywater treatment plant collects, stores, treats and may disinfect greywater.

Appropriately treated greywater can then be used for a range of wider purposes.

› What can greywater be used for?

Untreated greywater:

- ✓ lawns and gardens

Appropriately **treated** greywater:

- ✓ lawns and gardens
- ✓ washing walls, footpaths and vehicles
- ✓ flushing toilets
- ✓ laundry purposes and in washing machines.

Did you know?

Greywater is the most common source of water (27.2%) used by Queensland households with a garden (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007).

› What about wastewater from the kitchen?

Kitchen wastewater may contain fats, grease, food waste and cleaning products and is illegal to use in seweraged areas in Queensland due to health, safety and environmental impacts.

In unsewered areas, kitchen wastewater may be required to be filtered through a grease trap before passing on to an onsite sewerage facility. The treated wastewater can then be used for watering lawns and gardens.

› How can greywater be used?

Greywater can be diverted from laundries and bathrooms by:

- ◆ manual bucketing of untreated greywater
- ◆ connecting a flexible hose to a washing machine outlet
- ◆ seeking council approval for the installation of a greywater diversion device or greywater treatment plant, both of which must be installed by a licensed plumber.

Contact the **Department of Infrastructure and Planning** for further information about:

- ◆ approved greywater treatment plants and greywater diversion devices
- ◆ treating greywater and suitable applications.

› Using greywater responsibly in the garden

When using greywater there are some important tips to keep in mind for health, safety and environmental reasons. Installing an approved greywater treatment plant to improve the quality of your greywater can reduce the potential side effects on your garden.

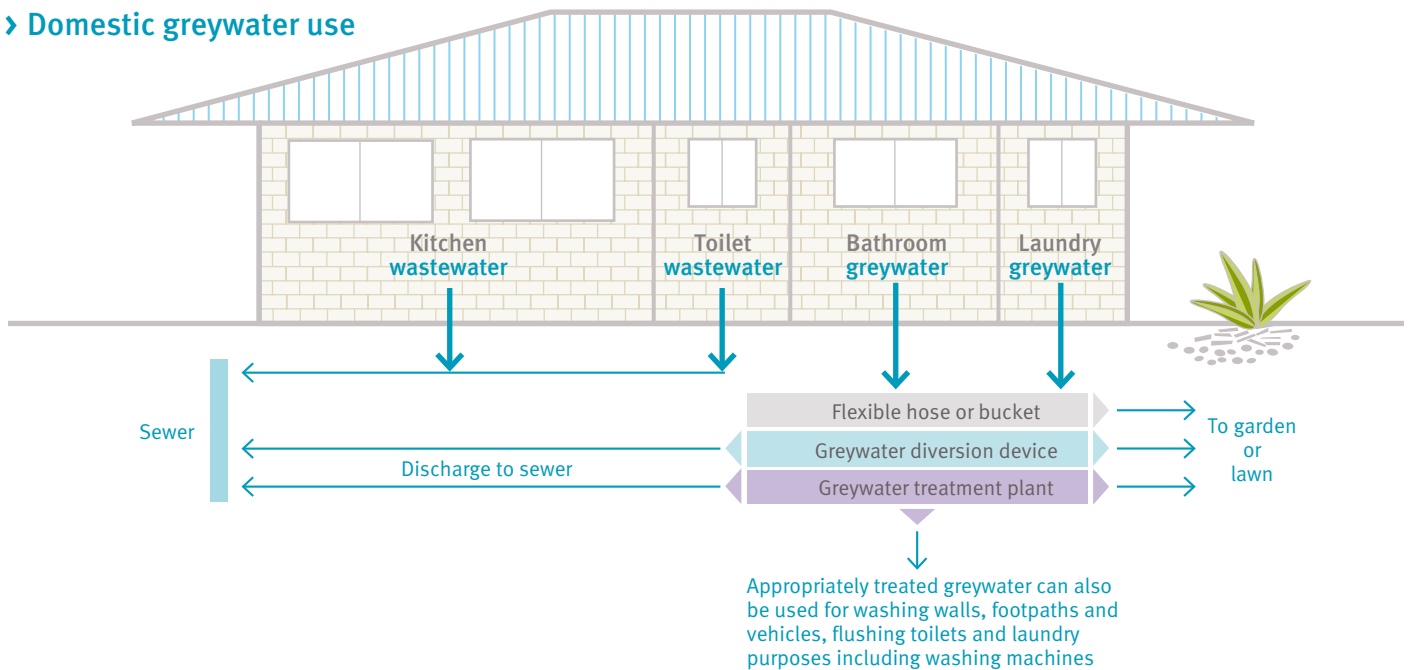
For advice on further improving the quality of your greywater see information sheet 3 — *Improving greywater and soil quality*.

Helpful hint

Only connect a flexible hose to the washing machine after checking the manufacturer's guidelines to ensure you do not void your warranty. The suitable length of hose and the way it should be connected varies for different washing machines. If not correctly attached, the hose can place unnecessary stress on the washing machine's pump.



› Domestic greywater use



› Responsible use of greywater

DO

- ✓ check with your local council if your area is suitable for installing a greywater treatment plant or diversion device as specific council requirements may apply (e.g. proximity to waterways)
- ✓ use greywater only when the garden needs watering as over-watering may damage plants and soil structure
- ✓ check which plants and turf varieties are greywater tolerant, as not all plants will flourish with greywater (see information sheet 2 – *Gardening and watering with greywater*)
- ✓ choose greywater-friendly washing machine detergents containing low nitrogen, phosphorus and sodium (salt) levels
- ✓ choose the best source of greywater available (see information sheet 3 – *Improving greywater and soil quality*)
- ✓ prevent run off of greywater onto neighbouring properties as this could become a health risk
- ✓ ensure if greywater is not used immediately (e.g. during rain or when the garden is sufficiently watered) it is diverted to the property's approved sewerage system
- ✓ always wash your hands thoroughly after contact with greywater.

DON'T

- ✗ store greywater as it contains organisms that can multiply quickly, causing odours and possibly becoming a health risk
- ✗ use greywater after washing clothing or items that have been soiled such as nappies, or exposed to chemicals such as work uniforms
- ✗ use greywater when anybody in your home is unwell
- ✗ allow greywater to form ponds, which could lead to odours and become a health risk
- ✗ allow greywater to pollute drinking water or groundwater, or to enter a watercourse
- ✗ use greywater on edible parts of herbs, vegetables and fruit, or allow it to splash on them
- ✗ let greywater come directly into contact with humans, as it may contain harmful pathogens (disease producing organisms)
- ✗ let children or pets play with or drink greywater, or allow their toys to come into direct contact with it
- ✗ use greywater from your washing machine if it contains liquid fabric softeners or conditioners as they can alter the mineral content and damage the structure of soil.

NRW thanks the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and Lifestyle Horticulture Industry members for their assistance in producing this information and providing photos.



Published April 2008 #28491

Additional resources

- More details on greywater are available in the following information sheets
2. Plants and turf suited to greywater
 3. Improving greywater and soil quality

Queensland Government rebates for greywater systems

Department of Natural Resources and Water

Full details and application forms can be found at www.nrw.qld.gov.au or by calling the hotline on 1800 243 585.