

'Grey water' serves a double purpose

In the past few years, gardeners and home owners in many drought-stricken areas have learned a new term, "grey water," in their efforts to conserve and extend water supplies.

Grey water, or wastewater from laundry and bath tubs, has been used increasingly to help shrubs, outdoor flowers and vegetable gardens through periods of dry weather and water-use restrictions.

The conservation idea is sound, but there are precautions, according to some garden experts.

First check to see if there are local laws or restrictions governing such waste water use.

Avoid excessive or continuous use of water containing full-strength detergents or soaps. Although biodegradable, these products' sodium which may harm plants if applied continually. A return to more normal moisture conditions will leach moderate sodium accumulations through the soil. It is best to dilute soapy water with rinse water before pouring around plants.

Do not use wash water to which fabric softeners have been added or water bearing bleaches or boron.

Soaps and detergents are alkaline, so prolonged use of wash water on acid-loving plants such as azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias, could cause some chlorosis - leaf-yellowing. When sup-

ply is adequate, addition of acidifying material such as aluminum sulfate, or fertilizers containing special nutrients for chlorotic plants will return the green color.

Some other do's and don'ts for using "grey water":

- Plants still nutrients during dry periods. An adequately fertilized plant is more healthy, has a more extensive root system, withstands insect and disease attack better, and uses water more efficiently than one suffering a lack of nutrients. Avoid over-fertilization, however, because excessive growth results in greater water need and can weaken plants during drought stress.

- Apply cool grey water, not hot. Hot water can damage stems and surface roots of plants.

- Apply water to soil around plants, not on the plants. Apply to feeder root area, away from the trunk or stem.

- Avoid use of greasy kitchen sink waste water. The grease can congeal and plug the needed open space, or pore space, between soil particles.

- Use only clean water on potted plants and house plants. The compact root area of these plants make them more sensitive to damage.

- For houseplants, collect clear water saved while waiting for bath or shower water to warm.



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