

Will the hosepipe ban make us water wise?

Hosepipe bans are now in force across the South East of England. This follows the fifth driest March recorded since 1910. There is a risk of even greater restrictions this summer but will this make us water wise?

If you are a keen gardener you'll understand the value of water. You may have connected a water butt to your roof guttering down pipe to collect rainwater. Perhaps you routinely water your garden in the evening and water plants at their base so less of the water evaporates. But when was the last time you thought to water your household plants with your used bath water?

The Energy Saving Trust estimates UK households use on average 350 litres of water a day. Most of us could use less. We could, for example:

- Avoid leaving taps running when washing vegetables and dishes
- Install an aerating shower head (replacing ½ the water with air bubbles)
- Fit a graduated flush device to toilets (to stop flushing 7 litres each use)
- Fix a dripping tap and save up to 5500 litres of water a year

Some homeowners take even more radical steps. This includes storing rainwater in 3500 litre underground tanks and using rainwater to feed loos and washing machines. They say that clothes washed in rainwater actually come out cleaner. You can quiz these eco pioneers to find out more at annual open home events in spring and September. See www.superhomes.org.uk for details.



Rainwater can provide for more than just plants

SuperHomer Donnachadh McCarthy uses rainwater to flush the toilet.

Photo courtesy of www.superhomes.org.uk

Notes for Editors:

1. This article was produced by the Sustainable Energy Academy.
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2. The Big Picture

The following water companies introduced hosepipe bans in April 2012: Anglian Water, Thames Water, Southern Water, South East Water, Sutton and East Surrey, Veolia Central, Veolia South East. In some areas drought has left groundwater below levels experienced in 1976 when household supplies were cut off and standpipes used. The ban follows one of the driest two year periods on record.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-17615364>

The Energy Saving Trust estimates UK households use on average 350 litres of water a day and a dripping tap wastes up to 5500 litres of water a year.

<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/In-your-home/Water/Water-saving-advice>

3. SuperHomes

SuperHomes harnesses the enthusiasm of pioneering households to demonstrate the benefits of switching to low energy living. SuperHome Open Days showcase today's technologies, providing a touch and feel experience to inspire visitors to action. They also let visitors see for themselves both the challenges and the financial and environmental savings to be made from such radical changes. Currently there are 120 registered SuperHomes and 85% of the population in England lives within 30 miles of one. The network includes a wide range of older property types including Georgian, Edwardian and Victorian houses.

SuperHomers volunteer their time for free to make these open home events possible and to share their experience. SuperHomes has won multiple awards and was a 1st prize winner at The Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy in 2009. Donnachadh McCarthy is one of the numerous SuperHomers who have taken major steps to reduce their water use. <http://news.sky.com/home/article/13563942>

4. Partners

SuperHomes enjoys the generous support of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, WWF, Grand Designs Great British Refurb Campaign, Energy Saving Trust, National Energy Foundation, Megaman, SIG Energy Management and PassivSystems.

5. The Sustainable Energy Academy

The Sustainable Energy Academy is a registered charity. It promotes education and action to reduce the carbon footprint of buildings and communities. Its primary initiative is SuperHomes - a network of older homes which have been refurbished by their owners to the highest standard of energy efficiency (at least 60% less carbon intensive). The aim is to create a network of 500 SuperHomes that are local and publicly accessible by 2020.