

Manual bucketing greywater

What is greywater?

Greywater is waste water generated from:

- bathrooms (showers, baths, and hand basins)
- laundries (washing machines, troughs) and
- kitchens (sinks and dishwashers).

There are health and environment risks associated with manually bucketing greywater from the bathroom or laundry onto lawns and garden areas. Be aware - kitchen water can contain food particles, grease, oils and fats. It is recommended you treat this water first before using it.

Long term use of untreated greywater on your property is not recommended

Untreated greywater characteristics

The quality of greywater can vary greatly. This is due to factors such as the number of people living in the home, their age, lifestyle, health, water source and products used.

Greywater can contain:

- disease causing organisms (bacteria, enteric viruses, helminths and protozoan parasites)
- chemicals from soaps, shampoos, dyes, mouthwash, toothpaste, detergents, bleaches, disinfectants and other products such as boron, phosphorus, sodium, ammonia and other nitrogen bases compounds
- dirt, lint, food, hair, body cells and fats, and traces of faeces, urine and blood.

You can reduce the risks presented by these contaminants by good management practices and sensible use.

Managing health risks

- Don't use greywater from washing clothes soiled by faeces or vomit (e.g. nappies).
- Don't store untreated greywater for more than 24 hours.
- Don't use greywater if others in the household have diarrhoea or an infectious disease.
- Don't use greywater to water fruit, vegetables or areas where fruit can fall to the ground and be eaten.
- Avoid splashing greywater and make sure you wash your hands before eating or drinking.
- Keep children and pets away from areas watered with greywater, until it has soaked into the ground.

Managing environmental risks

- Use shampoos, detergents and cleaning products containing low levels of boron, phosphorus and salt. **Boron** can be toxic to plants; some native plants are sensitive to **phosphorus**; **sodium** and other salts can damage soil structure. More information on laundry products is available at [Lanfax Laboratories](#).
- Only use rinse water from washing machines.
- Avoid using greywater containing harsh chemicals or bleaches, or after washing out hair dye or paint products.
- Greywater tends to be slightly alkaline. This can be harmful to acid loving plants such as azaleas and camellias.
- Rotate greywater application. Rainwater or mains water will help to flush salts from the soil.
- Prevent greywater pooling or runoff onto other properties, into watercourses and the stormwater system. Pooled greywater can turn septic and produce offensive odours.
- Don't over water your plants.
- Monitor areas watered with greywater. If there is visual evidence of damage to plants or soil, you need to change watering practices. Try a different or larger area, or reduce the amount of water used. Clay soils tend to be more susceptible to build up of salts and have low permeability. Take extra care when using grey water in areas of clay soils to avoid long term damage.

Permanent greywater systems

Permanent greywater systems such as diversion devices or treatment systems, or any device attached to plumbing, can increase the use of greywater. Due to potential risks associated with greywater, these devices and systems require authorisation in accordance with the requirements of the Plumbing Code of Australia.

Unauthorised diversion devices, such as direct hose connections on washing machines and waste pipes and permanent diversion of untreated greywater is not permitted.

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