

Recycled water and your home

Sustaining Victoria's water future

**SOUTH EAST
WATER**



Nearly 500,000 million litres of drinking water is used in Melbourne each year. However, uses such as toilet flushing and garden watering do not require drinking water quality.

Recycled water is a great alternative for these purposes so we can free up our precious water supply. It is also a sustainable solution to years of reduced rainfall.

Residents in particular estates in the South East of Victoria are now able to access this recycled water for outdoor use and toilet flushing in addition to the regular water supply.

By using recycled water you can reduce your drinking water use by an estimated 40%.

If you use recycled water wisely, you should be able to save money as it is charged at the lowest of the drinking water prices. Remember recycled water is still a valuable resource that should not be wasted.

So if you have recycled water – make use of it and:

- Do your bit to help the environment
- Save money on your water bills
- Enjoy a lush green garden

About recycled water

Recycled water is derived from wastewater and treated at a state-of-the-art treatment facility to what is referred to as 'Class A' water quality.

Safe to use

Recycled water is a safe and high quality water source that is strictly monitored by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). Water quality is continuously monitored to ensure a consistently high water quality standard. Any contact with recycled water is nothing to be concerned about as it is treated to a very high standard. Despite this high quality – **recycled water is not suitable for drinking or other personal uses.**

Using recycled water

Purple pipes

Recycled water comes from a recycled water treatment plant and is delivered to your house by a purple coloured pipe, to avoid confusion with drinking water pipes. Taps are signed "Recycled water, do not drink", and their purple colour should not be changed.

As a 'condition of connection' you must have a recycled water tap (purple tap) in your front and backyard. You may also have a drinking water tap in your backyard for other uses.

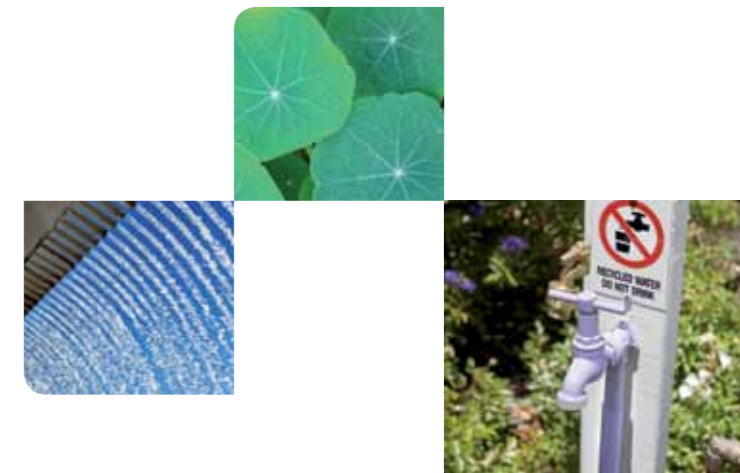
Recycled water is suitable for:

- Toilet flushing
- Garden watering, including vegetables
- Washing cars and furniture – **on grassed areas only**
- Fire fighting
- Ornamental ponds and water features. Water may need to be changed regularly to avoid algae due to additional nutrients in the water.

Recycled water is *not* suitable for:

- Drinking
- Cooking or any other kitchen purposes
- Showering or bathing
- Swimming pools and spas
- Evaporative coolers
- Children's water toys
- Washing clothes (although Victorian guidelines currently allow for clothes washing, South East Water does not yet permit this use).

If you do accidentally drink recycled water, don't panic. The likelihood of falling ill is extremely low. If there are any signs of illness please seek medical advice.



Use recycled water wisely

Although recycled water is not subject to water restrictions it should be used responsibly, because it is a limited resource.

Stormwater runoff

Recycled water has a higher level of nutrients than fresh water which is great for your garden but not for the stormwater system. Please ensure recycled water does not runoff your property into the street and into the gutter, as it could upset the local environment and cause algae to grow.

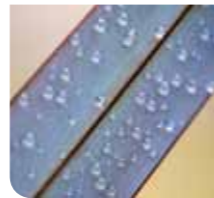
Please do the following:

- Check sprinklers are set at the correct height with no over-spray
- Ensure you are home when using sprinklers
- Wash cars and outdoor furniture on grassed areas

Recycled water and your toilet

You may notice that the water in your toilet has a light yellow shade and may vary from time to time. This is because the treatment does not remove all colour. Colour is not an indicator of quality.

In warmer weather, you may notice a slight odour from your toilet. This is due to stagnant water sitting in the cistern. Recycled water is a safe water source that is strictly monitored by the Department of Human Services and the Environment Protection Authority. We suggest you flush your toilet every few days to keep the water moving. You may also choose to use deodoriser blocks as well.





Your questions answered

Recycled water is suitable for pets

According to Victorian EPA and DHS guidelines, Class A recycled water is safe to use for pets' drinking water.

Car washing with recycled water should be done on the lawn

Recycled water has a high level of nutrients, which is good for the garden but not good for the stormwater system because it can upset the waterways. Washing the car on the lawn waters the lawn as well as reducing the risk of runoff into stormwater drains.

Purple pipes and taps does not mean that recycled water is being supplied

In the early stages of some developments recycled water infrastructure will be installed before the water is supplied. In this instance, you may either have no recycled water (a lock box will be installed on your recycled water meter) or you may have drinking water being supplied through the purple pipe in the interim. If this is the case the water is subject to water restrictions. Please ensure that you read through the Welcome letter and kit, and contact South East Water for further information or visit www.southeastwater.com.au

Permanent Water Saving Rules do not currently apply to the recycled water system

Yes this is true, however you still need to ensure that you use recycled water wisely, and ensure no water runs off your property.

Why is my recycled water locked up with a box?

This means your plumber has not performed all the necessary tasks to enable the water to be turned on by the Plumbing Industry Commission. If you are about to move in to your new home and the lock box is still in place contact your builder or plumber.

Using recycled water will benefit the environment

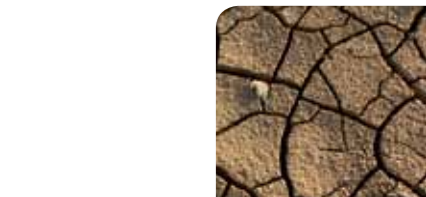
Firstly, it will reduce the household demand for drinking water, which will conserve our precious supplies. Secondly, reusing water that is treated by state-of-the-art treatment facilities means less discharge goes into our oceans and rivers.

Your water bills

Your quarterly water bill will itemise the recycled water charges separately to drinking water charges. Service and usage charges for the recycled water system will appear as separate items on your water bill and is currently priced according to the lowest of the three pricing tariffs of drinking water.

Notify all visitors about your recycled water

The way you use your recycled water, including informing your visitors, is your responsibility. You should notify all visitors, including contractors and social visitors of the appropriate uses. This includes not drinking water from a purple tap.



Do-it-yourself plumbing test

Testing 1,2,3

During the construction of your home the Plumbing Industry Commission (PIC) conducted inspections to ensure that the recycled water plumbing was correctly installed. We encourage you to conduct a plumbing test whenever you undertake renovations or plumbing maintenance to ensure that there are no accidental cross connections between the recycled water and the drinking water and appliances/taps have been correctly plumbed.

Cross-connection

A cross-connection is where the recycled water and the drinking water pipes have been incorrectly connected. Always ensure that plumbing work is undertaken by a licensed plumber. Plumbers must ensure that recycled water plumbing is installed, in accordance with the requirements of the Plumbing Industry Commission's Recycled Water Plumbing Guide.

Meters

If you have recycled water on your property, two water meters will sit side by side 300mm apart in your front garden. It is easy to identify the recycled water meter because it is purple in colour.

Water authority plumbing check

South East Water will undertake annual plumbing tests for selected houses. This may include testing after a change of household ownership. If your house is selected South East Water will contact you to arrange a convenient time.

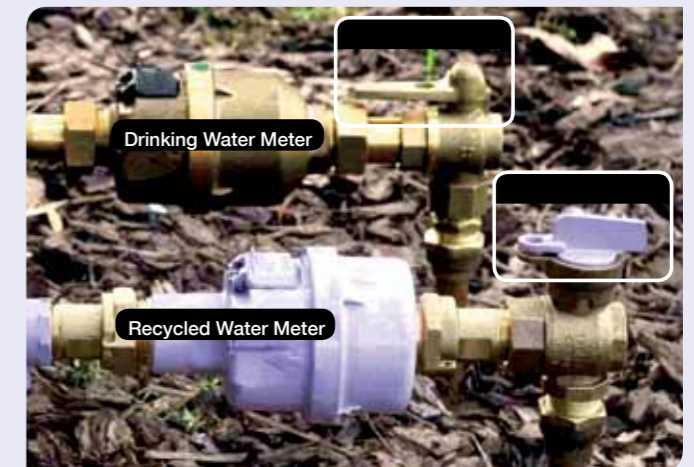
Signage

The 'Recycled water, do not drink' signs on each purple tap have a limited life span (approximately five years) due to sunlight, wear and tear. Once they deteriorate they should be replaced. New signs can be purchased from plumbing suppliers.

How to check your own plumbing

- 1 Turn off the drinking water supply to the property at the meter (drinking water meter and recycled water meter will be different colours). Recycled water supply to remain on.
- 2 Turn on all sink, bath and shower taps (both hot and cold) one by one. All taps should run dry after a short period of time.
- 3 After taps have run dry, flush all toilets. Toilets should refill as normal provided they are connected to the recycled water supply.
- 4 Turn on all outside taps. The external drinking water tap should run dry. Taps that continue to run are connected to the recycled water supply and should be clearly identified via appropriate prohibition signs.
- 5 To check appliances within the home, such as dishwashers and washing machines, turn off the recycled water supply and turn the drinking supply back on. Run the recycled water supply dry via the outside taps or toilet flushing. Turn on the internal appliances. If the appliances do not fill they are connected to the incorrect supply.
- 6 Turn recycled water supply back on at the meter. Turn on the tap connected to the recycled water supply that is located furthest away from the meter. Turn the tap back on slowly so that all air will be purged from the pipeline while it is being recharged.

Note: Don't attempt to check appliances like dishwashers and washing machines with the drinking water turned off.



Green gardening

Using recycled water for garden use is not much different to using drinking water. Regardless of which water is used, good gardeners consider the local conditions, soil type, climate and position when creating and maintaining their gardens.

Drought tolerant gardening

Although Class A recycled water is not subject to water restrictions it is important to remember that it is still a limited resource and should not be wasted. Sensible watering habits are better for the garden and can save you money.

Water saving tips

- Water at the roots not the foliage. This way the plant receives more and the leaves are protected from leaf burn.
- Regular deep watering, in the morning, will keep your plants healthy and save water.
- Apply mulch and compost to the garden bed to help retain moisture.
- Plan your garden – group plants with similar water needs for efficient watering.
- Reduce lawn size as grassy areas can be water greedy. Drought resistant grasses are commercially available.
- Use Australian plant species as they flourish on little water.
- While establishing your garden, water more frequently for less time and build up to one hour of deep watering once a week. Increase to twice a week during the peak of summer.
- Micro irrigation systems can deliver water efficiently to the roots in correct quantities. Drippers or sprays on short risers are also suitable.

Soil, compost, healthier plants

Soil conditions vary across the areas in which recycled water is available. Clay soils can present drainage issues, however the soil can be improved by adding organic materials like compost and gypsum. Loam soils generally provide better drainage. Regardless of soil type, adding or maintaining organic matter through composting, will help create healthier plants that can utilise water and nutrients efficiently.

Correct soil pH is important. It may be worthwhile purchasing an inexpensive pH testing kit from your local nursery to help you monitor your soil. Most plants require slightly acidic soils. As recycled water generally has neutral pH, it should not have any affect. Apply lime to raise the pH of acidic soils where necessary.

Extra source of nutrients

Nitrogen and phosphorous are present in recycled water at approximately 20 mg/l (milligrams per litre) and 7 mg/l respectively. Most plants thrive on extra nutrients. You may need to add extra fertiliser to high growth plants such as vegetables. Some native seedlings (grevilleas, hakeas, proteas and banksias) may be sensitive to phosphorus levels.

A grain of salt

Recycled water has a salt concentration that is approximately 500 parts per million (ppm). This is low relative to the salt concentration found in most irrigation water sourced from groundwater or surface water. Note: Roses, citrus, azaleas and camellias may be sensitive to salt, in particular at seedling stage.



Plants that thrive with recycled water

Trees

Aleppo Pine, Bottlebrush, Coral Gum, Weeping Sheoak, Olive, Willow Myrtle, Yellow Gum, Swamp Mallet, Wallangara White Gum

Shrubs

Ceanothus, Crimson Spot Rock Rose, Gawler Range Wattle, Geraldton Wax, Heath Banksia, Oleander*, Purple Rock Rose, Rosemary, Westringia, Yeddo Hawthorn

Flowers/Perennials

Agapanthus, Carnation, Lomandra, Marigold, Mondo Grass, Nasturtium, NZ Flax, Portulace, South African Butterfly Iris, Statice

Turf

Buffalo, Green Couch, Kikuyu, Seashore Paspalum

Climbers

Bouganvillea, Honeysuckle, Maiden Hair Creeper, Ornamental Grapevine, Snake Vine

Ground covers

Creeping Boobialla, Ice Plant, Pig Face, Seaside Daisy, Salt-bush, Seaside Juniper

Note: This list of plants is not exhaustive.

If you observe any changes in your plants that concern you, seek expert advice from your local nursery.

Horticultural advice provided by Burnley Agricultural College.

**Note: Oleander is a highly poisonous plant.*



Need help? Don't know who to contact?

Recycled water locked up?

If your recycled water is locked up you will not be receiving recycled water. Call your builder or plumber to perform the three required inspections so that the Plumbing Industry Commission can check the recycled water and remove the lock box. South East Water does not remove this lock box.

Just moved into your property and have no recycled water supply?

Although you may have purple pipes and recycled water infrastructure, recycled water is not always going to be available when you move into your property. Contact South East Water to check when your recycled water is going to be available.

Need a purple hose?

You can order purple hose kits (includes hose, trigger nozzle and sprinkler) at Bunnings stores or from Garden World in Keysborough.

Need a replacement removable tap handle?

Contact your local plumbing hardware supplier or plumber.

Problem with water pressure or water quality?

Contact South East Water on 131 694.

For further information about recycled water visit southeastwater.com.au

Visit us online
southeastwater.com.au
or call 131 694

