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# HOUSE WISE

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*"More than 30% of indoor residential water usage is consumed by your toilet!"*

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## How to Save Money in the Bathroom

*By Elizabeth Guinn*

We all assume there are lifestyle changes we could make that would amount to a big difference in the water we consume. We'd all like to do a better job of conserving water especially now that we are entering the warmer months, but what changes would offer the best return?

According to the EPA's Watersense Website ([www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense)), more than 30% of indoor residential water usage is consumed by your toilet. Using the EPA's figures, your toilet is the single largest consumer of water inside your house. So if you are interested in making changes that will net you the biggest results, you need to start with your commode.

Federal law mandates that all toilets manufactured today use 1.6 gallons per flush. However, if you have an older toilet you might be flushing more than that or if you have a HET you might flushing less. To qualify as a High Efficiency Toilet (HET), a toilet must only flush 1.3 gallons per flush. So, why would you want to

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## Dan's Desk

*By Dan Guinn*

If you have been reading House Wise for awhile, then you may remember my Christmas 2006 article on possible stocking stuffers for the handyman in your life. We had a tremendous response to that article and decided to continue the tradition by making it a semi annual event. We couldn't resist starting it off with a photo from one of our reader's Steve R. from Yorktown. He went out and bought one of the folding lock blade razor knives' after reading our article in

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switch to a HET anyway? Let's talk old toilets.

If your toilet was made between 1980 and 1994, then it probably flushes 3.5 gallons each time you use it. If that isn't bad enough, if you toilet was made prior to that then the numbers are more like 5.0 gallons per flush. Installing a new HET could mean a whopping 3.4 gallons per flush. Now let's run the numbers. On average, you will flush the toilet 140,000 times in your lifetime (yes, there are actually people out there that research this stuff). If the average life expectancy is 75 years that would be roughly 1867 flushes per year. Let's assume that you use the bathroom at your house for half of those visits. Now we are down to 933 times. If you live in an average family of four then we are back up to 3733 per year. Wow, that's a lot. If you were to go from a pre 1980 toilet to a HET model, that would be a water savings of 12,693 gallons of water in just one year.

Before we even calculate the cost of a gallon of treated water both coming and going, you can see the benefit of switching your toilet out. The EPA's calculations come to a \$90 savings on your water bill per year adding up to a \$2000 savings for the life of the toilet. However, they say that this number can be doubled if you are replacing a leaky old toilet.

How do you tell if you have a leaky toilet? Put a couple of drops of food coloring in the back of your toilet and wait. If any of the color has seeped into the toilet bowl in 15 minutes, then your toilet leaks and needs to be repaired or replaced.

But are HET's any good? The first lines of low flow toilets that came out were pretty wimpy at best. The good news is that 2007 is going to be a banner year for HET's. In addition to the advancements made in the technology, the EPA has set up a way of rating HET's. Later this year you will see toilet's with Watersense ratings much like appliances have the Energy Star rating. The new labeling will make toilet shopping easier.

If every household in the United States switched to HET's , the country as a whole would save over 900 billion gallons of water in one year. That is equal to the amount of water that flows over Niagra Falls in a two week period. What's your reason for not switching? I'd like to hear it if you've got one, because I certainly can't think of one.

And while we're on the subject, repeat after me: If it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down!!!



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December and was inspired to create. He sent us this photo, the caption that he added was:

"4 Cardboard boxes: Free  
 1 roll Packing Tape: \$2.00  
 1 pack markers: \$2:00  
 1 Kobalt knife: \$9.99  
 1 Saturday afternoon with the kids: Priceless!"



For Father's Day we have a few more suggestions to spark your creative genius. I'd like to start with a set of wrenches from Craftsmen. Yes, you may already have a set of wrenches but when I first saw these all I could think was "Why didn't I think of that?" They are advertised as "a new twist on wrenches" and are called the Cross Force Wrenches, they have a quarter twist at the halfway point. This brilliant invention allows you to push on the wrench on the flat part instead of the thin edge allowing you to put more pressure on your twist. An ingenious invention that is definitely on my wish list.

You should always put safety first and always, always, always wear your eye and ear protection when doing any home project. The problem with some of the protective gear is that it can be cumbersome and uncomfortable. My biggest pet peeve is when I am trying to be safety minded and I try to wear my ear muffs over my protective eye wear. If you have ever attempted this, you already know what I am talking about. The arm of the glasses does not fit under the muffs at all. The muffs press down on the glasses permanently embedding them into the side of your head. To add insult to injury, the presence of the glasses breaks the intended sound barrier and renders them useless as ear protection.



As strong as I like to believe that I am, there are those moments when a little more oomph is needed to get the job done. If you have ever tried to cut through an inch and a quarter limb with a standard pruning tool and been thwarted, I have the tool for you. A ratcheting tree pruner. Instead of one clipping motion, you ratchet down on the limb until the additional pressure finally snips it's way through. I love things that give me the mechanical advantage or any advantage for that matter. And speaking of energy efficiency, this baby gets great gas mileage!

Now for my absolute favorite and the item that has been on the top of my wish list for some time now. This tool is versatile, it can help you move dirt, cut brush, grind up trees in a single bite and more. What tool you ask could do all these tasks and more? Nothing less than a 268B Skid Steer from Caterpillar. Yes, this is actually what I am getting for Father's Day this year and maybe the next several as well. It comes with all kind of cool attachments

that can be quickly swapped out to perform a myriad of tasks. My personal favorite is the Fecon Forestry Cutter head. This rotating drum is 6 feet long and eats through anything your brave enough to push over. My wife also pointed out the cool tilling feature to me as I was driving it through the yard the other day. Every time I turned I instantly tilled up 10 to 20 square feet of the yard to a nominal 4 inch depth. What a benefit, the salesman didn't even tell me about that! Anybody wanna come play at my house this Father's Day? I won't mind cleaning up the drool.



## BBQ Rules, Just in Time for Father's Day

*Submitted By Tom Pitts, Southern Plumbing*

We are about to enter the summer and BBQ season. Therefore it is important to refresh your memory on the etiquette of this sublime outdoor cooking activity, as it's the only type of cooking a 'real' man will do, probably because there is an element of danger involved.

When a man volunteers to do the BBQ the following chain of events are put into motion:

- (1) The woman buys the food.
- (2) The woman makes the salad, prepares the vegetables, and makes the dessert.
- (3) The woman prepares the meat for cooking, places it on the tray along with the necessary cooking utensils and sauces, and takes it to the man who is lounging beside the grill.
- (4) THE MAN PLACES THE MEAT ON THE GRILL.
- (5) The woman goes inside to organize the plates and cutlery.
- (6) The woman comes out to tell the man that the meat is burning. He thanks her and asks if she will bring him another cold drink while he deals with the situation.
- (7) THE MAN TAKES THE MEAT OFF THE GRILL AND HANDS IT TO THE WOMAN.
- (8) The woman prepares the plates, salad, bread, utensils, napkins, sauces, and brings them to the table.
- (9) After eating, the woman clears the table and does the dishes.
- (10) Everyone PRAISES the MAN and THANKS HIM for his cooking efforts.
- (11) The man asks the woman how when enjoyed "her night off." And, upon seeing her annoyed reaction, concludes that there's just no pleasing some woman...



See Vaden Holloway at Southern Plumbing for all your Plumbing needs. Thanks to Vaden for his help on this Newsletter, he is the king, and look, he has a throne!

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