

Make the most of some gardening tips to save water this spring

Water experts urge the public to get into the garden this spring and make every drop count of Scotland's most precious natural resource.

With garden sprinklers using around 15 litres of water per *minute*, alternative methods to use less water will ensure the resource is protected and any waste is reduced.

Not only that, small and cost-effective interventions can play an important role in slowing the speed that water run-off hits our drainage systems and streets, and helps to reduce potential flooding risks.

A series of cost effective, simple tips have been produced by **Scottish Water** to help the country's gardeners make an impact – and are perfect for trying out with the whole family this Spring.

1. Install a water butt

A useful way to harvest rainwater, to save it for a sunny day, is to create a water tank. Buying and fitting a water butt is easy, but there are all sorts of hacks to reuse household items. Maybe using an old watering can, or a bin – there's a host of creative videos online that are simple and free to do. It's a great way to highlight to youngsters how much water a garden uses while also catching water to give plants a drink in dry spells.



Scottish Water is working with gardening experts to provide simple tips and hints to help Scotland's gardeners take steps to help tackle climate change.

Advice includes how to save water during times of drought risk and also how to help prevent flooding during times of extreme wet weather.

Among the simple tips is to use a watering can instead of a sprinkler to save water – and to use old watering cans to collect rainwater, helping to prevent flooding

2. Creative upcycle

From budget planters to making DIY garden pots, there is something for all the family to get involved in while giving a new purpose to unused or unloved material. For example, turning an old sandbox into a garden bed or getting handy with odd bits of wood to build and decorate a box – great ways to add colour to the smallest of spaces. And the perfect solution to absorbing water in heavy downpours, reducing surface water run-off which can contribute to flooding. It all helps!

3. Learn to love your lawn

Let your lawn get back to nature. Letting it grow a little longer is great for bees and bugs. Summer dry spells can mean your lawn becomes parched – but that’s natural too and you’ll be amazed at how it can bounce back with the next rainfall. Delivering water to your taps – whether in the garden and in the house – uses loads of energy, so only using the water you need can reduce our collective carbon footprints.

4. Water wise plants

Plants and trees play an important role helping to intercept rain before it hits the ground. Large leafy plants, shrubs and trees scattered throughout your garden will absorb groundwater through their roots and catch some water on their leaves. They’ll also help to shelter exposed ground, saving it from damage caused by intense rainfall.

5. Create a raingarden

Creating a natural ‘raingarden’ within your plot can help gardens cope during heavy rain and can be a much-needed haven for nature. They can also help reduce water flowing off paved areas quickly in heavy rain onto roads and into the sewer system and help reduce flooding downstream. Rain gardens can be created simply, by digging down to create a dip at the lowest part of your garden, to help water drain into it. Plant the space with plants that like wet conditions but can also cope with period of dry weather.

Gravel paths, permeable driveways and real lawns all help drain heavy rainfall which is all too familiar as the climate changes. If you must pave over part of your garden, then draining it through a raingarden helps to minimise rainwater run-off, helping nature and adding a welcome pop of colour to your garden.



For soaking up water in damp ground, the Himalayan blue poppy. is ideal. This is Meconopsis 'Slieve Donard' Scottish Water is providing tips to help the public tackle climate change in their gardens – not matter how large or small. Dawn Lochhead, Flood Risk Manager, is an expert in water smart gardening. She has shared 10 tips, including plants that will help prevent flooding by retaining water during times of heavy rain

6. Home composting

Composting is an inexpensive, natural process that transforms kitchen and garden waste into valuable and nutritious food for your garden. Starting this spring will save you money, resources and help improve your soil – while acting as a fun family project. Many councils can supply a compost bin, or you can cheaply make your own out of pallets or odd bits of wood. Loads of ideas can be found here: <https://www.gardenersworld.com/how-to/diy/how-to-build-a-compost-bin/>

7. Shades of grey water

Did you know the water you've already used to wash yourself, clothes and dishes is called 'grey water'? And this grey water can be reused to water your plants or lawn – a bit of soapy washing up water will do your plants no harm.

Top tips: Pop a few pot plants near your kitchen door, take your used washing up water to top up the plants when they need it. Just remember to let the water cool and water from the roots not the leaves. Avoid using greywater on edible plants.

8. Garden games

A fun way to encourage youngsters to think about the cycle of water from cloud to life is through different planting experiments. Why not identify an area where water naturally gathers during rainy days and plant vegetation that will thrive in that sort of soil, and do the opposite with a dry area? Lavender is a cheap plant that loves dry soil, smells great and attracts bees. Likewise the beautiful Himalayan blue poppy thrives in damp ground, helping reduce flooding.

9. Real vs Artificial grass

Despite the increase in artificial grass over the last decade, nothing beats the real thing for water efficiency. And it can often be a much cheaper option. Get the family together to level the lawn, distribute lawn seeds and watch it grow. This could make for an exciting holiday project. Artificial grass is essentially plastic, so it releases microplastics into the environment. A real lawn supports wildlife rather than harming it. If your only option just now is artificial, could you install a rain garden to manage rainwater runoff from hard surfaces. Something as simple as a raised bed or planter boxes; easy to create, maintain and add colour.

10. Show off your work and encourage others to do the same

By encouraging everyone to consider small changes to their lifestyles, people can save water, save money and help reduce

our collective emissions – so make sure to show off your water smart gardening with friends, in person and online. And remember, your actions can affect others down-stream, so be a good neighbour and do your bit to reduce flooding.



Dawn Lochhead, Scottish Water's Flood Risk Manager, in the garden of her Midlothian home with son Harris and pet dog, Rex. Dawn is an expert on how gardens can be optimised to make

optimal use of water and help prevent flooding during rainy weather and to reduce water use during potential drought periods.

These pics go with Scottish Waters 10 top tips for effective water use in gardens.

Dawn Lochhead, Flood Risk Manager at Scottish Water, is also a keen gardener who has implemented many of these tips in her own family garden in Midlothian. She said: "Water is precious resource, and we all need to look after it.

"I'm sure most of us think it rains a lot in Scotland – and that is true – but our weather is changing due to climate change, leading to us to a mix of longer dry spells and much heavier downpours which can lead to flash flooding.

"Modern life means we've changed our green spaces substantially. Being water-smart in our homes and gardens is an easy thing we can all do to help redress the balance, help nature thrive and reduce flood risk for ourselves and our neighbours.

"Thinking about drainage and the use of permeable materials in our gardens is the first step, allowing water to be absorbed and dissipate naturally. Plus capturing rainwater to use in the garden helps during dry spells.

"Planting a lawn, shrubs, flowers, creating a raingarden not only look great, they attract wildlife and are a true investment in everyone's future. If everyone did a few small things in their gardens this Spring, collectively we'd make a big difference."



Ladybirds and other wildlife flourish in gardens which can be used to help tackle climate change. Scottish Water is offering top tips to anyone with outdoor space on simple steps they can take to help reduce drought risks and to help prevent flooding



For dry gardens, try Magnolias. This is *Magnolia campbellii*. Scottish Water is providing tips to help the public tackle climate change in their gardens – not matter how large or small. Dawn Lochhead, Flood Risk Manager, is an expert in water smart gardening. She has shared 10 tips, including using drought resistant plants in dry areas to avoid water use when supplies are low.