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# EARTH HERO



# The Value of Water: Understanding Why Water Conservation Is Crucial

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In Malaysia, we are blessed with abundant rainfall and rivers flowing through lush rainforests and vibrant communities. Yet, despite this natural wealth, it's easy to take water for granted. We leave taps running, overwater our gardens, and use more than we need—without realising that clean, safe water is, in fact, a finite resource. As climate change, urbanisation, and population growth strain our water systems, the importance of water conservation has never been more critical.



This article explores why water is such a valuable resource and offers practical steps that individuals and households can take to reduce water waste. By making conscious choices, we can ensure clean water remains available not just for us, but for future generations.

## Why Water Conservation Matters

While Malaysia enjoys abundant rainfall throughout the year, this does not always guarantee a sustainable water supply. Factors such as poor water management, deforestation, pollution, and ageing infrastructure all contribute to disruptions in water availability. States like Selangor and

Penang have experienced periodic water cuts due to pollution incidents or low reservoir levels, highlighting the fragile nature of our water systems.

Compounding this challenge is the growing impact of climate change, which has led to prolonged dry seasons and increasingly erratic rainfall. These shifts are affecting water catchment areas and reducing water levels in key dams like the Klang Gates Dam and Sungai Muda. Compounding the issue is the high level of water consumption in Malaysia—on average, Malaysians use about 201 litres per person per day, far exceeding the World Health Organization’s recommended 165 litres. This overuse places significant strain on water treatment facilities and natural water sources, making conservation efforts more critical than ever.

## **Water-Wise Ways to Save at Home**

Saving water starts at home with small, mindful changes to our daily routines, we can make a big impact. Here are practical and easy ways to reduce water usage:

### **1. Fix Leaks Promptly**

A dripping tap can waste up to 9,000 litres of water a year, and even a small trickle from a toilet cistern can lead to significant water loss over time. Regularly check your kitchen, bathroom, and outdoor faucets for leaks. To easily detect a toilet leak, simply add a few drops of food colouring to the tank. If the colour appears in the bowl without flushing, you've found a leak that needs fixing.



## 2. Install Water-Efficient Fixtures

Upgrading to water-efficient fixtures is one of the most effective ways to reduce daily water use without compromising on comfort. Consider installing low-flow showerheads, aerated taps, and dual-flush toilets, which can significantly cut water consumption in the bathroom—the area where we tend to use the most water. These upgrades are easy to install and can lead to noticeable savings on your water bill over time. In some states, utility providers such as Air Selangor offer free water-efficient kits or rebates for households that switch to water-efficient appliances, so it's worth checking if you're eligible for these incentives.



## 3. Be Water-Wise in the Bathroom

The bathroom is typically the area where the most water is used in a household, but it's also where small changes can make a big impact. Start by taking shorter showers—aim for under five minutes—to significantly cut down on water usage. Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth or shaving instead of letting it run unnecessarily. When washing your feet or cleaning the bathroom floor, use a bucket instead of a hose to avoid excessive water waste. These mindful habits, when practised consistently, can lead to meaningful savings and help preserve this vital resource.

#### 4. Reimagine Your Laundry Routine

Washing machines can be one of the biggest water consumers in a household, so using them efficiently is key to reducing overall water use. Always run the machine with a full load to make the most of each cycle, and choose the economy or low-water setting if your machine has one. Reusing lightly worn clothes—especially those worn briefly indoors—can also reduce how often you do laundry. Not everything needs to be washed after a single wear, and this simple shift can save both water and energy over time.

#### 5. Rethink Outdoor Watering

In Malaysia's tropical climate, it can be tempting to water plants every day, but overwatering not only wastes water—it can also harm your plants. A smarter approach is to water early in the morning or after sunset when temperatures are cooler and evaporation is minimal. Use a watering can instead of a hose to control the amount of water used, especially for smaller gardens or potted plants. To further reduce reliance on tap water, collect rainwater in pails or water butts for gardening or household cleaning. Choosing native and drought-resistant plants like hibiscus (bunga raya) or bougainvillea can also help, as they thrive in local conditions with minimal watering.



## 6. Harvest Rainwater

Installing a basic rainwater harvesting system is a fantastic way to reduce reliance on treated tap water for non-drinking uses like washing your car or flushing toilets. Even simple containers can collect plenty of rainwater during Malaysia's frequent storms.

## 7. Educate and Lead by Example

Creating a water-conscious home starts with awareness—and it begins with you. Children, housemates, and even neighbours often learn by observing the behaviours of those around them. Make it a point to talk about the importance of saving water and the impact our daily habits have on the environment. Encourage simple actions like turning off taps, fixing leaks, or using water-efficient tools, and celebrate small wins together. Turning conservation into a shared goal not only builds stronger habits but also fosters a sense of responsibility and teamwork. You could even make it fun by challenging your household to reduce the monthly water bill or tracking who can take the shortest showers—every little bit adds up when everyone plays a part.



## Local Efforts Worth Noting

While individual actions are powerful, collective efforts at the community and national level are

equally important in driving lasting change. Across Malaysia, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and grassroots movements are working together to protect our water resources, raise public awareness, and implement long-term solutions. These efforts show that when communities come together, real progress is possible.

Several Malaysian initiatives are working toward better water conservation:

- **Sungai Watch**, an environmental group founded in Indonesia, has expanded to Malaysia and is working to clean rivers clogged with plastic and restore water flow.
- **The Water Watch Penang** organisation promotes public education and conducts water-efficient campaigns in schools and communities.
- **Air Selangor’s “Jom Jimat Air”** campaign provides tips, workshops, and even free water-efficient devices for residents.

### **Water is Life—Let’s Not Waste It**

Conserving water is not just about reducing your utility bills—it’s about protecting one of our most precious natural resources. It ensures clean water remains available for rural communities, for future generations, and for our environment.



Every drop counts. Whether it’s fixing a leak, taking shorter showers, or harvesting rainwater, your actions matter. When we learn to value water, we also learn to value the world we live in. Let’s work together to use water wisely—because a sustainable Malaysia starts at home.