Day 2: Install low flow shower heads for all your showers and faucet aerators on all your faucets.

Somebody needs to invent a better name for "low flow shower head". While it accurately describes it's purpose (to save water), it implies a weak, drippy shower, when in fact, it can actually provide what seems like MORE water with MORE pressure. This is an illusion, as described below, but as they say these days, "perception is reality". So we need a better name for "marketing" purposes.

A ten minute shower with a regular shower head can use as much as 42 gallons of water. A household of 3 people may take more than 1000 showers a year. This can be about 20% of the typical household's water usage. Unless you are in the unlikely habit of taking cold showers, much of that water detours through the hot water heater en route to the bathroom.

Low flow shower heads work by mixing air with the water and forcing it through tiny apertures. So you get just as wet with much less water. Low flow shower heads are typically 2.5 gallons per minute or less.

Make sure the low flow shower head has a shut-off valve on it. You save even more water if you use the shower to get wet, then cut the water off with the shut-off valve while you soap and scrub and shampoo, then turn the water back on to rinse.

Installing it is easy, even for non-plumbers. Use a crescent wrench to unscrew the old shower head. You can take the old shower head with you to the store to make sure you get a low flow unit with the same diameter and threads of the existing unit. Use the same crescent wrench to install the new shower head. If you get some drips, take the shower head off and wrap the threads once with some white plumbers tape, and then put the new shower head back on.

I bought ours at Ace Hardware, it was about $12.99, and we have been very happy with it.

Regarding faucet aerators, many faucets already have them, and nearly all faucets are threaded to accept them. They should have a water flow rating on the side. It should be 2.75 gallons per minute or lower. If it is higher than this, replace it. Generally this is a simple matter of unscrewing it by hand and putting the new one on, also tightening it by hand. Generally you should wrap the threads with white plumbers tape before installing the new aerator (wrap once). Use pliers if necessary to tighten it so it doesn't leak, but wrap the faucet with a rag first so you don't damage the finish of the aerator.

Regarding showers, if you are one of those "ten minute shower people", now is the time to think about reducing the time in the shower with the water running. As noted above, you can use the shut-off valve to turn off the water while soaping and scrubbing. Showers involve water and energy, and both of those resources are in increasingly short supply. If

you think you can't live and function without a ten minute shower with the water running all the time, meditate a bit on your sense of personal entitlement. Question that authority.

In the meantime, you can be certain that by:

(1) Installing low flow shower heads and faucet aerators, and

(2) Reducing the amount of time the water is running through the shower, and

(3) Using wash rags and towels that are air or solar dried,

you will reduce your household's water consumption and energy use, and that means more money in your pocket, less pollution in the biosphere, and greater quality to your life! Not to mention the virtue. . .

More info on sustainability may be found at:

www.bettertimesinfo.org

www.energyconservationinfo.org

www.bobwaldrop.net