



Senate Bill 463 has amended existing sewage regulations to allow the direct use of residential gray water for hand watering outside plants. The provisions within this amendment must be followed to reduce the risks to public health and the environment.

Private residential reuse of gray water shall be lawful if the following conditions are met:

- ...it is contained within the property
- ...it is limited to gardening, composting, lawn watering, or landscape irrigation
- ...it shall not be used for watering food plants
- ...it does not contain hazardous chemicals
- ...it is managed to minimize standing surface water
- ...it is outside of a floodway
- ...it has been disinfected* if collected after washing infectious objects or articles of clothing
- ...it is applied by hand watering with hand-held containers

What is Gray Water?

The Official Code of Georgia Annotated, O.C.G.A 31-3-5.2, states gray water is wastewater generated from residential lavatories, bathtubs, showers, clothes washers, and laundry trays. These fixtures do not include toilets, urinals, bidets, kitchen sinks, dishwashers, and garbage disposals.

Simply put, gray water is wash water used in the home, except from the toilet or kitchen sink. Kitchen sink and toilet wastewater contains high concentrations of food wastes, chemicals, viruses, and bacteria that can be harmful to soil, vegetation and can cause disease.

What are the Risks of Gray Water?

Any waste water whether it comes from the shower, toilet, or laundry machine poses a risk to a person's health and the environment. Because gray water is water that has been used, it has bacteria or chemicals in it that make it unsafe.

Any wastewater poses a potential risk.

Water quality of gray water can vary depending on number of household occupants, their age, health, water source, and products used (such as soaps, shampoos, detergents). Gray water may contain;

- Disease causing organisms (bacteria, viruses, protozoa).
- Chemicals from soaps, shampoos, dyes, mouthwash, toothpaste, detergents, bleaches, disinfectants, etc. (ammonia, boron, chlorine, phosphorous, sodium, and other nitrogen based compounds)

*Gray Water Contains Bacteria,
Viruses, and Other Hazards to Health,*

E.Coli or Salmonella

Hepatitis or Norovirus

Household Hazardous Chemicals

Higher Risk Gray Water Sources

Different sources of gray water pose higher risks and are not approved for use in Georgia. Water shall not contain hazardous chemicals derived from activities such as cleaning machinery or for certain hobbies.

Some higher risk sources of gray water include:

- Cleaning car parts
- Home photograph development lab
- Hobbies that rely on using hazardous chemicals
- Rinsing paint brushes



Gray water must be disinfected if obtained from a laundry machine

** To disinfect gray water, a cap full of unscented bleach per gallon of waste water can be used. The container then has to sit for 30 minutes before watering.*

Gray Water Do's

- Only apply by hand watering using watering cans or containers
- Only apply enough water that can be absorbed
- Only use waste water from baths, wash sinks, showers, washing machines
- Wash your hands following watering with gray water
- Stop using gray water if odors are generated or plants appear to be unhealthy
- Use gray water only during prolonged warm dry periods, and use only what you need to meet the plants needs

Gray Water Don'ts

- Don't water a vegetable garden with gray water
- Don't disconnect plumbing or pipes from sewer or septic systems.
- Don't allow gray water to flow from your property or enter storm drains.
- Don't use gray water from washing clothes soiled by feces or vomit, for example laundering diapers or illness in the home.
- Don't collect and store gray water
- Don't allow children or pets to drink or play with gray water

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Georgia Division of Public Health

Environmental Health

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[www./health.state.ga.us/programs/envservices](http://www.health.state.ga.us/programs/envservices)



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Revised: 04-13-09

O.C.G.A. 31-3-5.2

Gray Water Regulations “Hand Watering”



Environmental Health Section

DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

