



# Skagit County Department of Public Health and Community Services

*"Always working for a safer and  
healthier Skagit County"*

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## **GREYWATER USE FOR IRRIGATION**

Environmental Public Health Division  
360-416-1555  
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### **Where are greywater systems used?**

In years past, greywater from sinks, washing machines or showers were often kept separate from on-site sewage (septic) systems. Greywater sent to a separate tank or to a nearby ditch through a straight pipe were not uncommon practices before septic systems were regulated.

Trailers and campers usually have a separate tank for greywater than for the wastewater that comes from toilets.

### **Can greywater make people sick?**

Yes, it can carry bacteria, viruses, pathogenic organisms and even chemicals depending on what's connected to the greywater pipe.

Current septic system regulations require greywater to be treated just like it was sewage, even when it comes from a trailer or camper.

Greywater re-use for irrigation is allowed in very specific circumstances, but never as a substitute for a septic system.

### **How do I safely install and use a greywater irrigation system?**

**First**, contact Skagit County Public Health & Community Services for:

- Wastewater Treatment System permits (greywater is wastewater)
- Design requirements
- A list of qualified Designers and Installers

**Second**, have your designer match your specific needs and options for greywater use. The design of the system will depend on:

- The source and characteristics of the greywater
- The physical characteristics of the site
- Local code requirements
- How, when, and where the greywater will be used

**Third**, apply greywater safely by:

- Irrigating with greywater below the surface of the ground,
- Irrigating ornamental landscapes such as shrubs, trees, and flowers,
- Regularly checking your greywater system to be sure it is functioning properly.

From DOH web-site at [DOH Greywater Reuse Web Page](#)<sup>1</sup>

The use of a greywater irrigation system does not serve as an alternative to an approved on-site sewage system or connection to an approved public sewer. Greywater irrigation systems designed and installed under [Chapter 246-274 WAC](#) are intended for temporary, seasonal use. Diversion valves that redirect greywater to the permanent sewage treatment system are required on all greywater irrigation systems.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/WastewaterManagement/GreywaterReuse>