

Don't Flush Your Money Down the Drain

You can save 4,000 gallons of water a year by choosing an EPA recommended WaterSense High Efficiency Toilet.

If you're trying to do your part to save water, here's something you might not have known: 30% of the typical water consumption in a home comes just from pulling down the little handle on the side of the toilet tank.

National standards now require commodes to use not more than 1.6 gallons per flush. But the EPA has identified manufacturers and models that can do even better.

Through their WaterSense program, the US Environmental Protection Agency identifies products that are 20% more efficient than a typical product in that category. They've just released the first list of toilets that fall in this category, with a maximum water usage of 1.3 gallons per flush.

According to the EPA, using a specially labeled WaterSense toilet can save up to 4,000 gallons of water per year. That's 77 gallons per week – probably enough to fill the shelves of your local grocery store.

Unlike previous low flow toilets, these are all high efficiency and high performance, with testing and certification performed by a third party agency.

Here's some information on the on the approximate pricing and availability of the top choices in Raleigh and the Triangle area:

American Standard FloWise	\$359 retail price, Home Depot or Lowe's
Gerber Ultra Flush 21-312	\$360 list price - no distributors in NC – special order
Caroma Adelaide 270 Standard	\$709 list price – no distributors in NC – special order
Kohler Wellworth Pressure Lite	\$431 retail price, Home Depot or Lowe's
Mansfield Quantum One	Special Order Only – call for pricing
Niagara EcoLogic Flapperless Round	\$300 – Special order online from AquaPro solutions, add shipping/handling.

When shopping, look for the WaterSense label or ask if you can special order an approved item from the manufacturer. If the toilet comes in two parts as many do (a tank and a separate bowl), make sure both parts are approved. If you are having a new home built, ask your builder if he allows upgrades in his homes for sale – then specify what you want. If possible, find a manufacturer and style that does not require special ordering, to help keep costs down.

As standard toilets cost somewhere around \$60, opting to save water can be a little costly. The EPA anticipates that more and more manufacturers will be creating products that fit the requirements for

HET (High Efficiency Toilet) certification, which means prices will likely be driven down in the near future.

Some cities, such as Austin TX and Santa Cruz CA, are offering homeowners rebates to replace their current bathroom fixture with a new, approved HET. The City of Raleigh Water Conservation Task Force recommended that Raleigh offer rebates to residents who purchased low water toilets, but an official mandate doesn't appear to have passed yet. As more citizens become aware of these options, enough requests to the city council could bring this up for a vote sooner.

If you're currently remodeling or looking at Raleigh area homes for sale, consider spending a little more upfront to keep your water bills lower. You can find complete information at http://www.epa.gov/watersense/pp/find_het.htm. Pricing and availability current as of publish date. An update on style and model availability will be provided as information is available.

