



City of Santa Barbara  
Water Resources Division  
Building & Safety Division

# Graywater Fact Sheet

Community  
Development &  
Public Works  
Departments  
630 Garden Street  
805-564-5485  
805-564-5460

*Based on 2016 California Plumbing  
Code Chapter 15*

There is keen interest on the part of many Santa Barbara citizens in re-using household washwater for irrigation. This practice can save water and offer many other ecological benefits. Santa Barbara is a world leader in graywater innovation and policy. The rules below are based on the graywater section of the California Plumbing Code, which was inspired in large part by the experience and suggestions from Santa Barbara residents.

## General Rules

- **Kitchen sink, toilets, and diaper-soiled water are not included in the definition of graywater** (It may be possible to reuse water from these sources but this would be governed by wastewater, not graywater codes).
- **No ponding, spray, or exposed runoff of graywater is allowed.**
- **All systems must have an air-gap or suitable backflow prevention** to protect the potable water system.
- **Not for root crops or edible portions of food crops.**

## Laundry to Landscape System:

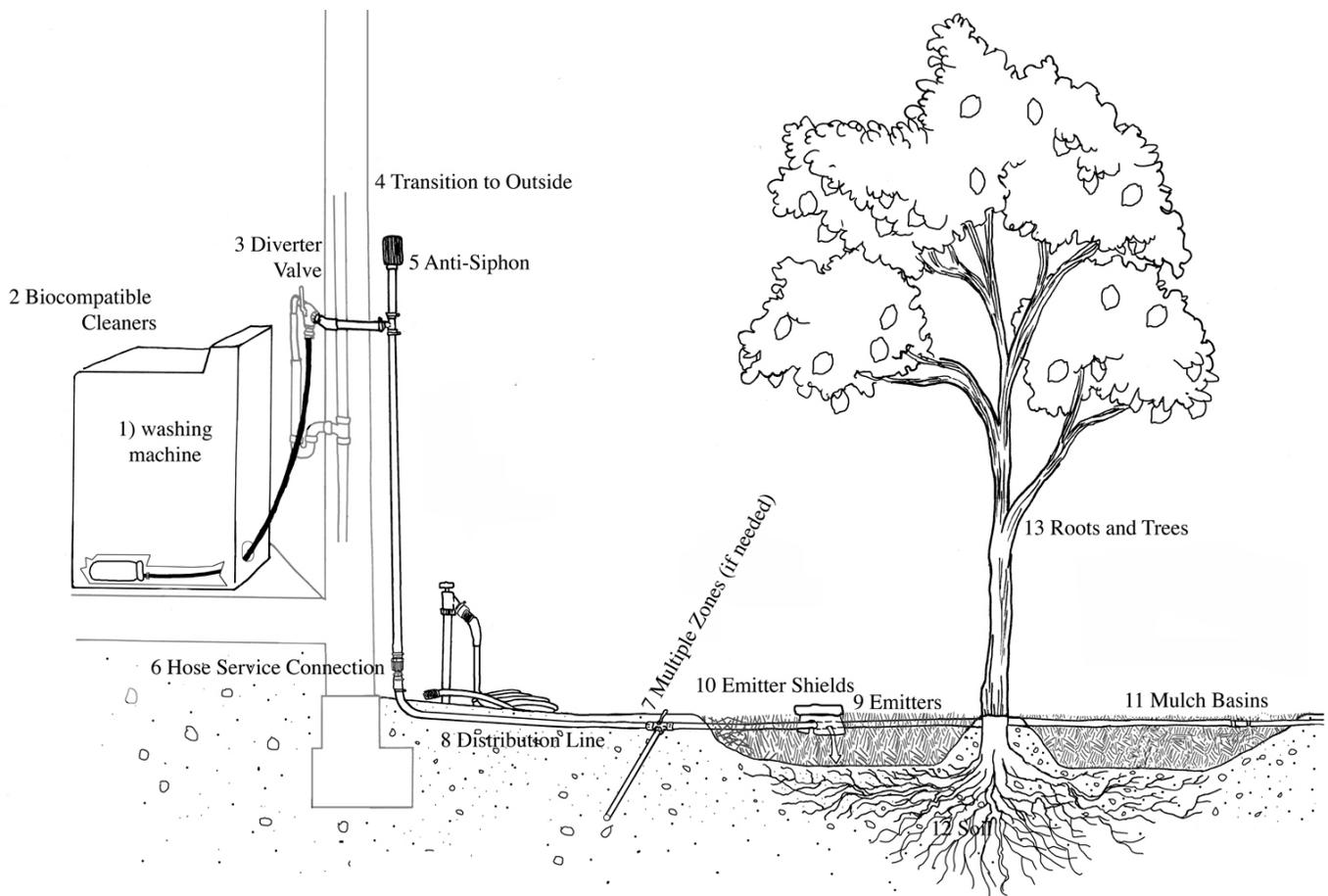
Clothes washer only (Laundry to Landscape) systems DO NOT require a City building permit; however, eleven conditions apply to this type of system:

1. **The design shall allow the user to direct the flow to the irrigation or disposal field or the building sewer.** The direction control of the graywater shall be clearly labeled and readily accessible to the user.
2. **The installation, change, alteration or repair of the system does not include a potable water connection or a pump** (other than the washer pump) and does not affect other building, plumbing, electrical or mechanical components including structural features, egress, fire-life safety, sanitation, potable water supply piping or accessibility.
3. **The graywater shall be contained on the site where it is generated.**
4. **Graywater shall be directed to and contained within an irrigation or disposal field.** (Note: mulch basins are an acceptable type of disposal field.)
5. **Ponding or runoff is prohibited** and shall be considered a nuisance.
6. **Graywater may be released above the ground surface provided at least two (2) inches (51 mm) of mulch, rock, or soil, or a solid shield covers the release point.** Other methods which provide equivalent separation are also acceptable.
7. **Graywater systems shall be designed to minimize contact with humans and domestic pets.**

8. **Water used to wash diapers or similarly soiled or infectious garments shall not be used** and shall be diverted to the building sewer.
9. **Graywater shall not contain hazardous chemicals** derived from activities such as cleaning car parts, washing greasy or oily rags, or disposing of waste solutions from home photo labs or similar hobbyist or home occupational activities.
10. **Exemption from construction permit requirements of this code shall not be deemed to grant authorization for any graywater system to be installed in a manner that violates other provisions of this code** or any other laws or ordinances of the Enforcing Agency.
11. **An operation and maintenance manual shall be provided.** Directions shall indicate the manual is to remain with the building throughout the life of the system and indicate that upon change of ownership or occupancy, the new owner or tenant shall be notified the structure contains a graywater system.

For sample plans for a Laundry to Landscape system, visit [www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Graywater](http://www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Graywater)

### ***Elements of a Laundry to Landscape Graywater System***



*Drawing used with permission from OasisDesign.net*

#### **Simple System:**

A simple system is defined as up to 250 gallons per day (gpd) of discharge, not including a clothes washer system, and is also called “Shower to Flowers.” Simple systems DO NOT require a permit, instead, simply register them for free with the City, please see our [“Simple System Graywater Packet.”](#)

#### **Complex System:**

A complex system is defined as over 250 gpd of discharge. These systems DO require a permit and all other aspects of the code apply. Please see our [“Guide to Permitting a Single Family Graywater System.”](#)