Reclaimed water is highly treated domestic wastewater that can be used for irrigation and other uses to extend our water supplies.

Up to 50 percent of a community’s drinking water is used for irrigation. Much of this irrigation water could be replaced with reclaimed water that is provided by water reuse facilities and delivered in purple-colored pipes.

Benefits of Water Reuse

- Costs less than drinking water
- Reduces fertilizer use, as some nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus remain in the reclaimed water
- Reduces stress on drinking water supplies
- Reduces disposal into waterways, which can help reduce nutrient loads in bays and rivers

Reclaimed water can be used for:

- Irrigation of lawns, landscapes, and golf courses
- Street-sweeping operations
- Car and bus washing
- Power generation
- Decorative fountains
- Fire protection (purple fire hydrants)
- Dust control
- Groundwater recharge
- Cooling or makeup water for a variety of industrial processes
- Natural system restoration

Reclaimed water can’t be used for:

- Body-contact recreation (including swimming pools and spas)
- Cooking or drinking (do not connect house pipes to the purple pipe)
- Irrigating vegetable and herb gardens (unless a drip or bubbler system is used—always wash your produce)

The wastewater-to-reclaimed water process

1. Screening and other processes to remove sand and debris;
2. Sedimentation for removing large solids;
3. Aeration so that microorganisms can break down organic materials;
4. Clarification to remove those microorganisms and any remaining solids;
5. Filtration to make water crystal clear; and
6. Disinfection, with chlorine or UV radiation, for killing pathogens and bacteria

Water reuse facilities are constantly monitored to ensure that only high-quality reclaimed water is distributed. This water is sparkling clear and essentially pathogen-free. Decades of experience has demonstrated that the use of reclaimed water in urban and commercial settings is both a safe and a reliable source of water.