

Permit Information for Graywater Irrigation & Rainwater Catchment Systems on Residential Properties

GRAY WATER SYSTEMS

Gray water is defined as untreated wastewater that has not been contaminated by toilet waste or unhealthy bodily wastes. Gray water includes wastewater from bathtubs, showers, bathroom washbasins, clothes washing machines, and laundry tubs, but does not include wastewater from kitchen sinks or dishwashers. The State Plumbing Code allows residential gray water for subsurface irrigation systems on single family residential and duplex lots without the need for a permit provided the gray water is supplied by only a clothes-washer and the system does not require cutting the existing plumbing piping. In addition, such permit-exempt gray water irrigation systems must adhere to the following requirements:

1. The system shall allow the user to have the option to direct the flow to the irrigation/ disposal field or the building sewer. The direction control of the gray water shall be clearly labeled and readily accessible to the user.
2. The installation, change, alteration or repair of the system shall not include a potable water connection, tank or a pump and shall 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 gray water shall be directed to & contained within a subsurface irrigation or disposal field and shall be contained on the site it is generated. Gray water is not allowed to be used for spray irrigation or be discharged into or reach any storm water system or any surface body of water.
4. Gray water shall be released no less than two (2) inches below the surface of mulch, rock or soil. Ponding or runoff of gray water is prohibited and shall be considered a nuisance.
5. Gray water systems shall be designed to allow no contact of the gray water with birds, animals, humans, and domestic pets and shall not be used to irrigate root crops or edible parts of food crops that touch the soil.
6. Gray water from washing diapers or other similarly soiled or infectious garments shall not be used for irrigation.
7. The gray water used for irrigation 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. The gray water used shall not contain waste from kitchen sinks or dishwashers.
8. An operation and maintenance manual for a gray water system shall 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 property contains a gray water system.
9. Exemption from permit requirements of this code for clothes washer gray water systems shall not be deemed to grant authorization to perform other work that requires a permit.
10. Comply with all applicable requirements of the current California Plumbing Code.

The construction, installation, relocation or alteration of any gray water irrigation system other than the clothes-washer gray water irrigation system described above requires that a plumbing permit be obtained from the City. In order to obtain said permit, the City's Building and Safety Division will require the following items:

1. A set of plans and specifications showing the proposed gray water system. The gray water system shall be designed in accordance with the requirements in Chapter 16 of the adopted edition of the California Plumbing Code. For simple systems meeting the following conditions, a completed gray water standard plan issued by LADBS (Los Angeles Department of Building & Safety) is acceptable:
 - a. Simple system: Gray water discharge is 250 gallons or less per day
 - b. Gravity systems: System that do not include pumps to distribute gray water
 - c. Stand alone: your system is not connected to any source of potable water or other irrigation systems
 - d. No storage: gray water is discharged into the irrigation field immediately without being stored
2. Approval from Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) Cross Connection Control Unit. Incorporate DPH's requirements into the drawings.
3. Approval from a soils consultant.

RAINWATER CATCHMENT SYSTEMS

No City approvals or permits are required for installing an exterior rainwater catchment system on a residential property provided the following conditions are met:

- 1) If the captured water is to be used for outdoor non-spray irrigation (i.e. drip irrigation, subsurface irrigation, irrigation by hose) the maximum storage capacity of the system is limited to 5,000 gallons. In addition, the water storage tank must be placed directly on the ground, the ratio of height to diameter or width of the tank cannot exceed 2 to 1 and no electrical power or a makeup water supply connection can be used.
- 2) If the captured water is to be used for spray irrigation (i.e. sprinklers), the maximum storage capacity of the system is limited to 360 gallons.

The installation, construction, alteration, and repair of any rainwater catchment system that is intended to supply indoor uses such as water closets, urinals, trap primers for floor drains and floor sinks, requires the issuance of a Permit by the City and said Permit cannot be issued until complete plumbing plans, with data satisfactory to the City, have been submitted and approved by the City.