

Water Quality Starts at Home! *Simple Tips, Lasting Benefits*

Much of our drinking water comes from rivers and lakes – which is where everything we wash down storm sewers eventually ends up! It's in our interest to protect water quality. Water quality can also be affected when stream flows drop in summer and fall. ***These are some important things you can do to help protect water quality – it really does start at home!***

Lawns

- 1. Minimize the amount of lawn in your yard and increase shrubbery, flower beds, and clumps of native vegetation.**

Grass acts like pavement: it does not filter runoff effectively, thus allowing contaminants to enter storm sewers. And, it does not absorb runoff well, so the supply of water in the ground is not restored.

- 2. Minimize your use of pesticides and fertilizers** to reduce runoff into surface water.

Maintain healthy soil through aeration and use of compost to top-dress lawns. If you must use a fertilizer, use a WIN(water insoluble nitrogen) one.



- 3. Water wisely.** Encourage deep rooting by watering in frequently, but thoroughly.

Yards

- 4. Dispose of pet waste in the garbage or down the toilet;** don't leave it on the sidewalk or on your lawn.
- 5. Use rain barrels to reduce runoff and conserve water.** Use the water in them to water flower and vegetable gardens during dry weather. Avoid having your eavestrough discharge directly to the road.
- 6. Compost organic debris** rather than burning it or throwing it in the garbage. You can use the rich compost to make your soil healthier.
- 7. Replace small engines** like lawnmowers, leafblowers, weed eaters and chainsaws with the latest non-polluting 4 stroke engines.

Roadways

- 8. Build an "open surface" (rather than paved) driveway, using crushed rock or interlocking paving stone.** Porous or "permeable" surfaces help runoff to be absorbed by the ground, thus replenishing groundwater. This helps reduce surface water flows during storms and in the spring, and means that streams will have more water flow in dry periods.
- 9. Keep your vehicle well-maintained,** to minimize fluid leaks that contribute chemicals to stormwater.
- 10. Wash your vehicle at a commercial car wash that recycles water,** or on the lawn with a sponge and bucket. Avoid washing it in the gutter where soapy water will run down
- 11. Sweep sidewalks away from roadways;** this reduces silt and debris flowing down storm sewers and improves water quality. Avoid using a hose to wash down sidewalks and driveways. This flushes contaminants directly into storm drains – as well as wastes water.

Inside the House

- 12. Use alternatives to strong chemical cleaners.** Consider baking soda, vinegar, washing soda, borax, pure liquid soap and ammonia in place of strong disinfectants and poisonous cleaners.
- 13. Replace old toilets with new low-flow ones;** this is the biggest single thing you can do to help conserve water.

The Living by Water Project
April 2003
www.livingbywater.ca