

What Can I Do to Protect Our Water Resources?

We all have an impact on the health of our watersheds. Our daily actions on our own properties, including how we care for our yards and dispose of our waste, may seem unimportant, but these small actions have can a huge effect across an entire watershed. There are many ways you can help improve your watershed. Here the top ten according to the Center for Watershed Protection:

- 1. Disconnect your downspout**
Rain from your rooftop may flow indirectly or directly to the storm sewer, or a local waterbody. You can redirect the flow so it goes to your yard or garden.
- 2. Install a rain barrel**
Capture your rooftop runoff and store it for future use to water your garden or wash your car.
- 3. Install a rain garden**
Rain gardens are landscaped depressions that capture and slowly infiltrate runoff from your rooftop or a paved surface. They not only remove pollutants but are a beautiful alternative to lawns.
- 4. Plant a tree**
Trees provide oxygen to breathe, clean the air of pollution, reduce runoff, and when located properly can even lower heating and cooling costs. If you have a stream on your property, consider planting trees along the stream to stabilize the banks, provide shade to stream organisms, and filter pollutants from runoff.
- 5. Landscape with native plants**
Native plants require less water and fertilizer and are more resistant to pests and disease since they are already adapted to local conditions.
- 6. If you have a lawn, make it a low-input one.**
This means managing your lawn to use the least amount of water, fertilizer and pesticides possible, which also translates into low inputs of your own dollars!
- 7. Pick up after your dog**
Dispose of pet waste properly by either flushing it down the toilet, putting it in the trash in a sealed plastic bag, or burying it in your yard.
- 8. Maintain your septic system**
Have your septic system inspected every two to three years by a licensed septic tank service contractor, and pumped as recommended by the inspector (generally every 3-5 years). Septic system failures can be costly and also contaminate groundwater and nearby surface waters.
- 9. Properly dispose of household hazardous wastes**
This includes many paints, solvents, used motor oil, pesticides, cleaning products and more. These substances should be disposed of at a household hazardous waste collection program or recycling facility, and should not be discarded in the trash, sink or storm drain.
- 10. Join a local watershed organization!**