

# TOP TEN WATER PROTECTION TIPS

There are simple things we all can do to help protect our shared water resources. From drinking water quality and wildlife health, to preserving recreation opportunities and the environment overall, making these tips part of our everyday habits will add up to healthier water for everyone.

## Use a little, Save a lot.

Water conservation is always important, not just during times of drought. Conserving water reduces the amount of stress placed on the water resources we all depend on for our drinking water. Whether you get your drinking water from the Mississippi River or from a private or municipal well, it's important to develop the habit of using a little less every time you use water. It can be as simple as turning off the faucet when you brush your teeth to using a rain barrel to water your lawn or garden.

## Don't Clutter the Gutter.

Ever think of that storm drain in front of your home as waterfront property? Sure, the view isn't the same, but it does connect your property directly to the nearest lake, river, or wetland without any treatment detours. That's why it's so important to keep grass clippings, compost, detergents, fertilizers and chemicals out of the storm drain. The water — not to mention the ducks, fish and everyone else — will be healthier without it.

## Read All About It!

Learn to read the label on household products and look for "caution", "warning", "danger" or "poison" — and then be sure to dispose of items with those labels properly. From button cell batteries and bug spray to medicine and mothballs, many common products we use every day contain potentially hazardous ingredients and require special disposal. Dumped on or buried in the ground, these hazardous materials can contaminate the soil and move down into the groundwater or be carried by runoff during rainstorms into nearby surface waters, potentially poisoning our drinking water.

## Discover FREE Fertilizer!

Yard waste and kitchen scraps can be put to much better use than being collected and dragged to the curb every week. Composting is a practical, convenient way to turn lawn, garden and kitchen waste into nutrient-rich fertilizer for enriching flower and vegetable gardens, improving the soil around trees and shrubs, and enhancing the soil for houseplants. Compost is one of nature's best mulches and soil amendments, and you can use it instead of commercial fertilizers. Using compost improves soil structure, texture, and aeration and increases the soil's water-holding capacity. It also loosens clay soils and helps sandy soils retain water. Best of all, compost is cheap. You can make it without spending a cent.

## Keep It Green while Getting it Clean.

There's nothing quite like the joy of washing your car on a breezy summer day — but did you know that driveways, streets and parking lots are not the place to do it? That's because when you wash on these paved surfaces, washwater containing oil, grease, metals, detergents, and phosphorus can easily flow into storm drains and then straight into our lakes, rivers, and wetlands. With just a few small changes, you can keep your car AND our water clean. Instead of washing your vehicle on paved outside surfaces, use a do-it-yourself or full-service car wash. Or, wash your vehicle a safe distance from paved surfaces, using phosphorus-free detergent. Who says you can't have both? Snazzy car, snazzy planet.

## Keep Your Sewage to Yourself.

Homes and businesses not connected to a city-managed sanitary sewer system usually treat their sewage through on-site treatment systems, commonly referred to as septic systems. Properly managed, septic systems recycle water back into the natural environment, reducing health risks to humans and animals and preventing surface and groundwater contamination. As the most common cause of septic system failure is excessive water entering the system, conserving water is a good place to start to help maintain good performance. Most importantly, ALL septic tanks MUST be periodically pumped (cleaned) to remove floating scum and sludge that accumulates over time. How often this needs to be done depends on a number of factors, but it's generally recommended that a septic tank be cleaned (pumped) every two to three years.

## Mow Green!

Raise the blade on your lawn mower to improve the quality of your yard and save on fertilizer and watering costs. Longer grass blades above ground mean deeper roots beneath the surface. The grass can absorb more moisture and nutrients, and prevent germination of weeds by creating more shade during weed germination. When you do have to fertilize, only use phosphorus-free fertilizer — it's the law in Minnesota! Also, leave grass clippings on your lawn to naturally recycle valuable nutrients back into the soil. Following these simple tips helps protect our precious water resources and keep your yard looking great. Plus, who can argue with a little less yard work? You can head to the lake sooner and set a great example for the rest of the neighborhood.

## Don't Leak into the Lake.

Motor oil, grease, fuel, brake fluid and antifreeze leaking from your vehicle onto the driveway or street can easily wash into the storm drain during snowmelt or rain, and then make their way to the nearest lake, river, or wetland without treatment. Once they enter the water, automotive fluids can reduce fish and wildlife populations, impact human health and increase the cost to treat drinking water. So fix those leaks at the first sign of a drip — it's good for your vehicle and the water.

*Tips continued on back...*

Learn more and get involved at: [www.mnwaterconnection.com](http://www.mnwaterconnection.com)

### Find the "Gold" in Your Gutters.

One easy way to help protect lakes, rivers, wetlands and other drinking water sources is to redirect your roof gutters and downspouts away from hard surfaces such as your driveway or the nearest street. Instead, direct the water to your lawn, flower bed or rain garden. Another option is to store the water in a rain barrel for future use. Whatever options you choose, keeping the water off of hard surfaces and allowing natural infiltration will keep your property looking great, protect your drinking water and maybe even save you money. Your lawn and garden will thank you — beautifully!

### Build a Beautiful Garden, for a Beautiful World.

A rain garden is a strategically placed garden designed to intercept water runoff that would otherwise run into the stormsewer or collect in pools and puddles in your yard. By building a rain garden on your property, you're helping the water infiltrate into the ground and creating a beautiful addition to your landscape. Rain gardens help protect neighboring lakes, rivers and wetlands from sediment, excess nutrients, oils, and other stormwater contaminants. They also provide valuable habitat for wildlife (not including mosquitoes!), recharge local ground water supplies and help prevent local flooding. Once your rain garden is built, you can sit back and celebrate knowing that you are doing your part to keep our water resources clean.



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[www.mnwaterconnection.com](http://www.mnwaterconnection.com)  
[info@mnwaterconnection.com](mailto:info@mnwaterconnection.com)

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# TEN SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO KEEP THE WATER CLEAN



Clean water. It starts with you.