



Healthy Backyard Streams

Living in an Urban Watershed

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If you live in an urban watershed, you are probably aware of the impacts to the environment of large numbers of people, pets, cars, and other day to day activities. In a concentrated area, the effects of improper use of chemicals, large amounts of traffic, concentrated numbers of pets and other human-related uses can be much more significant than in a rural area.

There are things that we can all do to help reduce the cumulative impacts of our daily lives. Some are small changes, like taking shorter showers and combining errands. Others require more thought or a different way to do something like switching to an electric or push mower.

What can you do?

Start now

What you do at home helps you to participate in solutions to the climate crisis as well as pollution problems in your local community. Here are some things that you can do now to lessen the impact of your activities on resources like streams, creeks, and the Puget Sound and to 'live greener'.

Conserve Water

How to Conserve Water

- ◆ Install a 1.6 gallon toilet
- ◆ Repair leaks
- ◆ Wash full loads of laundry
- ◆ Shorten shower times
- ◆ Reduce faucet water use
- ◆ Conserve water outdoors
- ◆ Buy a water-efficient washing machine
- ◆ Reduce water use in the yard and garden
- ◆ Use rain barrels to collect and reuse roof water



Compost/Mulch/Amend Your Soil

Building healthy soil is the first step to creating an easy-to-care-for garden that will require less water and fewer chemicals. Composting yard and household waste keeps the waste out of landfills and reduces the fuel needed to haul them away. Adding compost to the soil and mulching plants helps soil hold water and nutrients, suppress diseases, and improve the health of plants yearround.

Good soil and thorough watering helps the roots grow deeper, which keeps them stronger during dry periods.

Some ways to compost

- Worm bins** - for household waste
- Compost bins** - for yard waste
- Sheet composting** - for twigs and branches
- Compost Fences** - slow composting of twigs

Alternatives to Toxic Pesticides and Herbicides

For cleaner streams, and a healthier Puget Sound, it's imperative that consumers look for alternatives to toxic fertilizers and chemicals. Think vinegar on weeds and beer for slugs!

Pet Waste

Pet waste is a constant factor contributing to polluted lakes, streams, and Puget Sound. Fortunately, there are easy steps you can take to help reduce pollution.



- First, always pick up your pet's waste**
- Second, dispose of pet wastes properly.**

Collecting it

Collecting it and placing it in a garbage receptacle is currently the recommended practice. Make sure to always wash hands after handling pet waste.

Burying Pet Waste – this is no longer recommended, and actually discouraged. Composting or burying your pet's waste does not reliably destroy the harmful organisms.

Flushing down the toilet – Best not to do, especially if you have a septic system.

In the Garden

- ◆ Plant native trees and shrubs to provide habitat corridors, host-plants for pollinators like bees and butterflies, and shade and wildlife habitat. They also help control erosion, cool streams, and provide leaf litter for insect food.
- ◆ Planting trees in appropriate places can also shield your home from summer sun and winter wind.
- ◆ Install drip irrigation systems, they use 50% less water than conventional sprinklers.
- ◆ Sweep your sidewalks rather than hosing them down to conserve water.
- ◆ Remove invasive plants before they gain a foothold.
- ◆ Group plants together with similar watering needs.
- ◆ Water in the morning which reduces the amount of water lost to evaporation and allows plants to dry out to prevent disease.