

ACTIONS FOR HEALTHY LAKES

TAKE ACTION AT HOME TO KEEP OUR LAKES AND STREAMS CLEAN

WHY ARE LEAVES A PROBLEM?

Leaves release phosphorus when they break down and represent one of the largest sources of urban phosphorus pollution to our lakes. When left in the street, leaves make a phosphorus-rich “tea” that washes down storm drains and directly into our lakes! Over the course of the year, more than 50% of phosphorus in urban stormwater can come from leaves in the street.

Proper yard care is a great way for homeowners to help our lakes. Have the biggest impact by raking leaves from the street in front of your home and help reduce the amount of phosphorus going into our urban stormwater!

Did you know?

It only takes 1 pound of phosphorus to produce 500 pounds of algae in our lakes!

Water combines with phosphorus from leaves to create a “tea” that contaminates our lakes.

HOW CAN YOU HELP MANAGE LEAVES?

Rake them up: The best thing you can do to help reduce urban phosphorus runoff is to rake your leaves from the street edge before it rains. Try to keep the street clear of leaves at least three feet from your curb to keep nearby gutters and storm drains clean.

Start backyard composting: Why dump your leaves on the curb to have them hauled away like garbage? Instead of creating a potential source of pollution, consider starting a compost pile. Compost from leaves can help your garden and planted spaces stay healthy.

Mulch: Leaves are an easy and cost-effective mulch alternative. You can mow leaves directly onto your yard and leave them there to provide nutrients or place the mulch around plantings. If you still opt for standard woodchips, place a bed of mulched leaves first! You'll need less mulch and will save money (and our lakes) in the long run.

CLEANLAKESALLIANCE.ORG/LEAVES

DO YOUR PART TODAY!

EVERY ACTION COUNTS. YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

HARVEST RAINWATER

Connecting a rain barrel to your roof downspout allows you to collect, store, and repurpose rainwater and save money on your water bill. Your plants will love the chlorine-free water, especially when the soil dries out between storms.

By keeping more rainwater in your yard, you can reduce the amount of runoff and harmful pollutants going into our lakes!

Lake steward challenge!

See if you can connect all of the roof downspouts on your home to either a rain barrel or a rain garden. Most rain barrels connect directly to your downspout.

CREATE A RAIN GARDEN

A rain garden is a small depression in the landscape that collects and soaks up rainwater. Usually planted with beautiful wildflowers, rain gardens will add curb appeal to your home while attracting a variety of songbirds and butterflies. Rain gardens keep our lakes clean by giving rainwater a place to go as it washes off driveways, patios, and rooftops.

Step 1: Determine your rain garden location, mark with string or paint, and start digging. A rain garden should be located at least ten feet away from a home to keep water from seeping into the foundation. Ideally, it should be located in an area that will catch runoff from nonpermeable surfaces or areas of low infiltration.

Step 2: Dig to form a small berm on the downhill slope of the landscape. The berm is needed so that rainwater flowing into the rain garden will become trapped in the garden, rather than flowing out the downhill side of the garden. The berm may be covered with mulch or grass after the garden has been built. Quick tip! Make sure the growing surface of the garden is level to maximize its effectiveness.

Step 3: Rain gardens can be any size, although typically rain gardens are between 100 and 300 square feet. Peat can be added to garden soil to enhance absorption. A layer of mulch may be added to the garden surface.

Step 4: Once you have dug your rain garden, choose your plants—and have fun! Perennial plants are best because they will grow every year and require little maintenance.



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