



# **“De-greening” the Water: Simple steps residents can take to keep local waters clean**

Eutrophication may sound like an exotic African disease, but it is actually a term used to describe lakes and slow-moving rivers that have too many nutrients.

In a eutrophic river, algae, weeds and other aquatic plants grow and grow until the water turns green. Algal blooms make the water smelly, keep people from enjoying fishing, swimming and boating, and, in some cases, can even create toxic conditions that are unsafe for children and pets.

To understand how eutrophication happens, think of your favorite foods. A little ice cream is delicious; a lot of ice cream makes your clothes stop fitting. The same phenomenon is true for our local waters. A little nitrogen and phosphorus are necessary for plants like duck weed, blue flag iris, yellow lotus and even algae to grow. Aquatic plants provide habitat and a food source for fish and waterfowl. When there are too many nutrients, however, the weeds and algae can turn local lakes and rivers green.

When it rains, the water washes phosphorus and other nutrients off of residential properties and into storm sewers and ditches. You can help to keep local waters clean by making a few simple changes in your lawn care and landscaping:

1. Reduce or eliminate your use of natural and store bought fertilizers in your lawn and gardens.
  2. When you mow the lawn, turn the mower around so that the grass clippings blow into the yard and not onto the street.
  3. If you have a home along a lake, river, stream or wetland area, plant deep-rooted native plants or trees along the water's edge instead of a mowed lawn or sandy beach.
  4. If you live on a steep hill, plant native plants, trees and shrubs to stabilize your soil and limit the amount of nutrients that are washed away during rain storms.
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