



Ways to Prevent Nutrient Water Pollution at Home

Nutrient water pollution is one of the most widespread and challenging environmental problems we face. When too many nutrients, mainly nitrogen and phosphorus, enter our waterbodies they cause excessive algal growth. Algae growth is the green slimy surface cover we see in lakes, ponds, and creeks in our neighborhoods. Excess algae growth can reduce or deplete dissolved oxygen available to aquatic life and, in many instances, produce toxins that can harm people, animals, and aquatic life.

We can all take actions to help reduce nutrient water pollution through daily choices we make around our homes and yards. Three ways we can help reduce nutrient water pollution is to pick up pet waste and change some of our lawn care and gardening habits.

Pet waste:

- Always pick up after your pet. Pet waste is a major contributor to nutrient pollution.
- Inform other pet owners of why picking up pet waste is important and encourage them to do so.
- Do not put pet waste into storm drains. Let others know that the pet waste and other storm water runoff goes directly to a creek or stream.
- Avoid walking your pet near streams and other waterways. Instead, walk them in grassy areas, parks, or undeveloped areas.
- Use pet waste stations when walking your pets in our City parks.



Lawn Care:

- Apply fertilizers only when necessary and at the recommended amount. Fertilizer is probably the biggest contributor to nutrient pollution at residential homes.
- Don't apply fertilizer before windy or rainy days.
- Apply fertilizer as close as possible to the period of maximum uptake and growth for grass and other plants, which is usually spring and fall.
- Avoid applying fertilizer close to waterways.
- Do not overwater lawns and gardens; use a soaker hose, a porous hose that releases water directly to the ground, which can reduce overwatering that carries away fertilizers that would otherwise enrich lawns and gardens.
- Fill fertilizer spreaders on a hard surface so that any spills can be easily cleaned up.
- Properly store unused fertilizers and properly dispose of empty containers.



- Maintain your lawn mowers, snow blowers, chain saws, leaf vacuums and similar outdoor power equipment to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions.

Garden Care:

- Plant a rain garden of native plants, shrubs and trees that reduce the amount of fertilizer needed and provide a way for water to soak into the ground.
- Install a rain barrel to collect rainwater; the rainwater can later be used to wash your car or water your plants and lawn.
- Remove unused sidewalks, patios, and driveways to allow more rainwater to soak into the ground.
- Use pervious pavers for walkways and low traffic areas to allow water to soak into the ground.
- Install a green roof on your home or business.
- Incorporate best management practices, such as grassed swales, filter strips, or buffer strips on your property to control and temporarily store stormwater runoff.
- Use yard waste, which includes grass clippings and leaves, in mulch or compost for your garden. If this is not an option, prepare all clippings and leaves for community composting, or in barrels or secured paper bags for disposal, which keeps them from washing into streams.



Sources:

- United States Environmental Protection Agency Nutrient Pollution Webpage at [Nutrient Pollution | US EPA](#).
- Google Images