

How can you help keep your drinking water **clean**?

Did you know the water that runs off your yard, field, or nearby street can end up in local rivers and lakes, which is where your drinking water comes from? When rainwater runs over the ground and picks up soil, chemicals, or litter on its way to the nearest stream, it's called **non-point source pollution**.

There's a lot you can do to help keep your local streams and lakes – and your drinking water – clean. **Here are a few tips:**



In your home

Use less plastic. Missouri Stream Team volunteers pulled 433 tons of trash from Missouri's rivers in just 1 year. **That's almost 50 garbage trucks!**



A lot of trash that ends up in our waterways is plastic, which can take 1,000 years to decompose. The best way to stop this is to use less plastic in the first place. For example, you can:

- Fill up a water bottle instead of using disposable ones.
- Drink right from the cup instead of using a plastic straw.
- At the grocery store, choose food packaged in cardboard or paper instead of plastic. If possible, bring your own shopping bags.

Think about what goes down the drain. What you flush or wash down the drain can end up in lakes or rivers.

- **If it can be harmful to you, it can be harmful to your water.** Never flush or wash chemicals or medicine down the drain.
- **Use soaps, face wash, and toothpaste without microbeads in them.** Microbeads are tiny plastic particles that wash down the drain and end up in our rivers and lakes, enter the stomachs of fish and other wildlife, and can make them sick.
 - > Go to beatthemicrobead.org to see if your products have microbeads.
- **Only flush toilet paper down the toilet.** Even wipes that say "flushable" can clog the plumbing and public sewer system.



Compost. Another great way to produce less trash at home is to start a compost pile in the garden. **You can put food scraps and lawn clippings in it,** so you'll also save money on plastic trash bags and yard waste bags!



In your yard or field

Now that you're an expert on how to help protect your drinking water around the house, let's look at what you can do outside.

Plant trees. The roots of trees soak up rainwater, filter out pollutants, and hold the soil in place to lower erosion.

- Erosion is when soil gets washed away during heavy rains. Also, trees are great to climb on!



Plant native grasses and other plants that have grown in Missouri for a long time.

- Native plants are used to our soil and weather and need less fertilizer and watering, which also saves time and money.



Let lawn grass stand a little bit taller when you cut it. About 3 inches is perfect for most grass types.

- Tall grass helps rainwater soak into the ground rather than run off.



If you help wash your family's cars at home, let soapy water run into the grass rather than into the street or sewer.

- The grass filters out pollutants so they don't end up in our water supply.



Keep animal waste away from streams and throw pet waste in the trash, especially if you live in the city or a neighborhood.

- This stops bacteria from getting washed into nearby streams. It's nicer for your neighbors, too!



In your community

Don't be a litterbug. Anything that's on the ground may end up in a nearby stream, **so always be sure to throw your litter in a trash can or take it home so you can recycle it.**



Get involved!

- **Organize a litter cleanup with your friends!**
- **Plant trees and native plants in your community!**

This publication is funded by the **Missouri Foundation for Health** in partnership with **Health Literacy Media** and **Missouri Stream Teams**.

