

Homeowners Guide to Keeping Wetlands Healthy

Wetlands are valuable because they protect our drinking water, reduce flooding, provide wildlife habitat, help recharge aquifers, and filter polluted water. Wetlands and ponds provide habitat for numerous birds, fish, turtles, frogs, and mammals. It's important for homeowners to know that they can directly affect wetland health and water quality. This brochure lists ten important ways you can help protect Lincoln's water resources.

1. Go Green with your Lawn

A super-green, lush carpet of grass that's the envy of your neighbors can cause big water quality problems. Because fertilizers and pesticides applied in excess are washed to rivers, ponds, and wetlands, eliminating/limiting their use can make a big difference. Even better, convert manicured lawn to natural meadow and beds of native perennials. Please note, any spraying (whether performed by you or on your behalf by a company you engage) to be performed within 100 feet of a wetland or 200 feet of a year-round stream must be reviewed and approved by the Conservation Commission in advance.

- **Fight Weed with Eco-Friendly Herbicides** - Try Deadeye (a vinegar-based formula) and WOW nitrogen fertilizer made from corn gluten. Pour boiling water or white vinegar on smaller weeds (i.e., walkway cracks).
- **Kill Insects with Kindness** - There are many companies who sell mosquito and tick prevention services to residents, most of which include chemical management techniques. These companies often imply that the insecticides they spray on yards are safe for everything except mosquitoes and/or ticks. However, some of these companies are also very reluctant to reveal what chemicals they use. Instead of hiring a company to spray chemicals on and around your yard, we hope you will focus on the prevention measures such as wearing long sleeves and pants and dumping kiddie pools and bird baths often. A list of non-chemical, natural insect repellants is available at: www.eartheasy.com/live_natpest_control.htm.
- **Go Native** - When landscaping your property, use native species (plants indigenous to Massachusetts) whenever possible. They require less water than grass does, because they have deeper roots and can store more water. Growing native plants can save more than half the water normally used to care for outdoor plants, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council. Also, many of these species provide food and cover for local wildlife, providing a sanctuary from suburban sprawl. For more information, visit Lincoln Land Conservation Trust's Native Plant Toolkits here: <https://lincolnconservation.org/pollinators/toolkits/> or visit Native Plant Trust's website here: <https://www.nativeplanttrust.org/>
- **Plant a Rain Garden** - Locate it in a natural low spot where it can intercept runoff from hard surfaces such as streets, driveways, and walkways. Keep it at least 15 feet away from building foundations. For more information, check out: <http://www.raingardennetwork.com>.

2. Nature likes it Messy

Some people want to "clean up" nature to create a park like appearance. However, wildlife often needs thick tangles of undergrowth, leaf litter, and deadwood to survive. In addition to providing habitat for a myriad of organisms, deadwood is critical to the health of the forest. Forest health revolves around decomposing wood and leaves. Deadwood fosters forest life whether a standing oak that is riddled with woodpecker holes or a fallen willow that has created a snag in a small brook. Think twice before you "clean up" or clear out your forest. If you live near a pond and are concerned that there are too many nuisance plants or algae growing in your pond, Lincoln's wetland laws require that you speak to the Conservation Commission prior to doing any management/work (vegetation removal or chemical treatments) within or near the pond.



3. **Protect Wetlands with Planting a Natural Pollution Barrier Around Them.**

If you live on the banks of a stream or adjacent to a wetland, a natural vegetative buffer is particularly important to prevent runoff from going directly into these waters. Protecting water bodies with native vegetated buffer zones will help maintain water quality, recreational resources, wildlife habitat, and property value.

4. **Don't let those creatures go (info about invasive animals and plants)**

Although exotic animals can be great pets and ornamental plants can make beautiful decorations, many of these species are invasive. In fact, some of the characteristics that make these species desirable, like hardiness and rapid growth, are the same characteristics that allow them to out-compete native plants and animals in the wild. So never release aquarium pets, Koi, or bait fish into the water.

5. **Compost Yard Waste**

A lot of people think that because grass clippings, brush, and other yard waste are 'natural', it is ok to dump huge piles in the woods or wetlands. However, dumped yard waste destroys the underlying vegetation and wildlife habitat; and prohibits new trees and shrubs from growing. Leaf dumping near water bodies has resulted in flooding problems upstream. Roadside ditches, used to remove road run off, can get clogged from leaves dumped there by residents and landscapers. Brush and yard waste (leaves & grass clippings) can be brought to the DPW Facility, 30 Lewis St. during normal business hours and during the first Saturday of each month (b/w 7:30 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.).

6. **Scoop the Poop**

It is a dirty job, but if you don't do it, you're directly contributing to local water quality problems. Pet waste contains parasites that can cause human (and pet) health problems and be harmful to our wetlands and streams. Please pick up after your pet and never throw pet waste into a storm drain or waterway.



7. **Don't be a Drip**

Oil, gasoline, and antifreeze from cars, trucks, lawnmowers, and boats are highly toxic to wildlife. If you notice a leak, fix it immediately to keep these toxins from polluting our waterways.

8. **Drain Swimming Pools wisely**

Never drain pool or hot tub water directly into a body of water. The best option is to discharge chlorinated water over landscaping using the following steps: (1) shut off the chlorination system or stop adding chlorine one week before draining; (2) make sure the pH level is between 6.5 and 8.5, the normal pH range of surface and ground waters; and (3) Drain pool water where it will not flow directly into a street, gutter, or a wetland, stream, or pond.

9. **Maintain your Septic System**

Choose commercial drain cleaners carefully as many may be harmful to the groundwater and to your leach field. When septic systems are not pumped routinely, the leach field may become clogged and added nutrients may reach wetlands and ponds. Contact the Board of Health for more information about your septic system (781-259-2614).

10. **Ponds and Wetlands are Wonderful!**

Ponds and wetlands are valuable because they reduce flooding, provide wildlife habitat, help recharge aquifers, and filter polluted water. Wetlands may not be wet all the time. Low areas that flood in the spring may be wetlands. All kinds of wetlands are protected by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and local wetland protection bylaws. Always contact your Conservation Commission before you conduct work (i.e., clearing, cutting, grading, and filling) near wetlands, ponds, streams, and flood zones.

