

# Seven ways to protect your watershed

- Asphalt and concrete are your watershed's enemies. As water flows over paved surfaces, it collects soil, pet waste, salt, fertilizers, oils and other pollutants. This polluted runoff flows right into the storm drain system, and it's then carried, untreated, to the nearest body of water. Clean your sidewalk and driveway with a broom, not with water; and try to wash your car on gravel, grass or other permeable surfaces so that soaps, dirt and oil do not enter the storm drain system.
- Minimize the square footage of impervious surfaces (such as concrete and asphalt) on your property. Use paving blocks, grass driveway strips, wood decks, wood chips and crushed rock when designing driveways, patios and garden pathways. This will allow rainwater to soak through the ground slowly rather than go directly into the storm drains.
- Don't dump products that contain toxic chemicals or pharmaceuticals on the ground or into sewers, and never flush garbage of any kind down the toilet. Household cleaners, paints, solvents, pesticides and other chemicals can be very harmful to the environment, and materials such as cigarette butts create problems at sewage treatment plants.
- Use natural, organic gardening and lawn-care products.
- Use non-phosphate soap to wash your car.
- Plant trees and support pro-forest initiatives. Soil erosion due to forest depletion results in water pollution.
- Convert your lawn. Native plants tend to be better adapted to local environmental conditions, and can require less fertilizer, fewer pesticides and less water than typical grass lawns.