



Keep It Clean!
Take steps to reduce the amount of pollution that enters stormwater.



Dispose of hazardous waste properly

Take unused hazardous products like paint, pesticides, fertilizers, oil, and antifreeze to the [household hazardous waste depot](#) in your municipality.

Use natural cleaning and personal products

You can find natural cleaning products almost anywhere, but don't be fooled by [greenwashing](#). Read the label. Know what you're looking for. Look up your favourite [cleaning](#) and [personal care products](#) to help you choose the safest ones.



Detox your parking lots and driveways

Direct downspouts away from paved areas to minimize icing hazards. Don't use [coal tar based driveway sealants](#) - they contain high levels of polycyclic hydrocarbons (PAHs) which are carcinogens and disrupt aquatic life. Maintain your vehicles regularly at a licensed mechanic.

Wash your car at a commercial carwash

Take your cars to a commercial carwash where the wastewater will be treated. Look for the [International Carwash Association WaterSavers](#) sign of approval indicating the sustainable practices of individual carwashes.



Put butts where they belong

Provide ashtrays and ensure cigarette butts get contained in the garbage. If you are a smoker, carry a [pocket ashtray](#). If you own or manage an establishment where people smoke outside, provide an ashtray and sweep up butts left on the sidewalk.



Spread only natural fertilizers

Instead of using commercial fertilizer on your lawn, use a mulching blade on your mower, aerate annually and apply composted organic matter to build soil health (be sure to do this during dry weather). This will help keep the nutrients out of the storm sewer and let the goodness soak into the ground when it rains.

How to Make a Dog Waste Digester

Pick up dog waste

Be sure to pick up pet wastes using a compostable bag, then bury or compost it properly. You can buy compostable bags from pet stores or make your own scooper from folded newspaper or a paper cup. You can also [build a dog waste digester](#) in your backyard and let it decompose naturally.



Slow It Down

Slowing rain down helps protect your property and our water, reducing erosion and flooding. Here are some simple things you can do to slow rain down.



Disconnect your downspout

Disconnect your downspout from the storm sewer and allow rain to soak into permeable areas. The City of Portland provides [instructions](#) on how to disconnect your downspout.

Install a rain barrel or cistern at each downspout

Install a rain barrel or cistern at each downspout and be sure to drain it before the next rain. Many communities have rain barrel subsidies and incentives. Find out what's available in your community by contacting your [local office](#).



Enhance the urban forest

A single large tree can trap over 9000 litres of stormwater each year. So get busy and plant a native tree. LEAF has a [Tree Benefits Calculator](#) to measure the benefits.

Conserve Water

Install water saving hardware and appliances the next time you're upgrading. Governments often have rebates for making these changes. Check with your [local office](#) to find out more.



Soak It Up!
Soil and vegetation can be used to absorb rainwater, reducing volumes while filtering pollutants.



Build a rain garden

Rain gardens, bioswales and dry ponds are depressed areas, planted with special plant species that have long root systems. Once established these root channels allow rain to percolate up to 12' underground, even in tight clay soils. Visit [Rain Garden Tour](#) for instructions and examples of established rain gardens. A bioswale is similar except that it is linear - essentially a ditch designed to slow flow and maximize infiltration as water is being carried away from the site.



Plant native trees and plants

Native trees and plants intercept stormwater, absorb water through their roots, and are adapted to excessive moisture and drought. Toronto-based LEAF has a [comprehensive list](#) of native trees and shrubs. Evergreen also has a [Canada-wide database](#) of native plants.



Reduce paved areas

Pavement prevents water from soaking into the ground. Depave any unnecessarily paved areas. If you have a larger paved area on a public site, consider partnering with others in your community to stage a [Depave Paradise](#) event.

Consider permeable pavement

Permeable paving provides a stable surface while allowing rain to percolate down through gaps and gravel into the ground, [recharging the aquifer](#). Some pavers are also designed to allow grass or other low growing species to thrive in the spaces between the drivable surfaces. [Learn more about permeable pavement](#).

How to Make a Soakaway Pit

Install an infiltration gallery or soakaway pit

Infiltration galleries and soakaway pits are basically a hole in the ground filled with some type of permeable medium (plastic crate, gravel) that allows water to enter and percolate through into the soil. Watch the accompanying video to learn how to build a soakaway pit on your property. Check out how this school [fixed up their sports field](#) using one.