

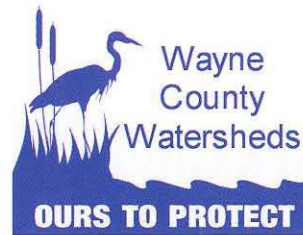
fairly long time. Organic nutrients depend on microbial organisms in the soil to break down the material and make it available to plant roots and have characteristics which benefit the soil system. It increases the organic content of the soil, improves the physical structure of the soil, and increases the bacterial and fungal activity in the soil.



- Use natural or organic slow-release fertilizers. They last longer, enhance soil life, and don't wash off into streams as easily.
- Manage bad bugs with traps, barriers, and "least toxic" pesticides to protect natural predators and other essential garden life.
- Avoid "weed and feed" and other herbicides. Pull weeds or spot spray to minimize herbicide use.

### Want More Information?

Contact the MSU Extension offices about their Master Gardener Program at (313) 833-2925 or the Wayne County Department of Environment about their Master Composter Program at (734) 326-3936.



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# HOW TO BE A RIVER FRIENDLY GARDENER



*Recommended by the Wayne County Department of Environment, Michigan State University Extension Oakland County, Michigan State University Extension Wayne County, and the Michigan Composting Council Recycling Organics Team*

[www.wcdoe.org](http://www.wcdoe.org)

## How Your Gardening Practices Can Help

### Build Healthy Soil with Compost



Compost helps grow healthy plants using less water, fertilizer, and pesticides. It helps soil absorb and store water, and purify runoff.

- Mix two to four inches of compost into the top six to eight inches of soil when planting.
- Mulch garden beds annually with compost, leaves, bark, or wood chips.
- Topdress and aerate lawns. Spread up to one-half inch of compost on lawns. Core aerate to get compost and water down to roots.
- Leave clippings on the lawn.
- Compost garden and kitchen waste at home.

Good kitchen waste includes: egg shells, vegetable and fruit scraps, and coffee grounds/tea bags. Bad kitchen waste includes: meat scraps, oils, fish (might be good, but attracts animals), bread, and food cooked with oils.

### Choose the Right Plant for the Right Place!

Proper plant selection will enhance habitat and reduce your need to irrigate or use chemicals.

- Choose plants adapted to your garden conditions.
- Plant pest and disease resistant varieties to reduce the need for chemicals.
- Go Native! Native plants thrive with little care in the right conditions.
- Minimize lawn areas. Most trees, shrubs, and groundcovers need less water and fertilizer.



## Use Water Wisely!

Efficient and proper irrigation keeps water on lawns and gardens, instead of watering impervious surfaces and causing runoff and pollution problems.

- Choose plants that need little or no irrigation.
- Group plants with similar watering needs and water appropriately.



- For gardens, water deeply but infrequently to grow deep roots to prevent disease. Soak the roots, then let the top few inches of soil dry before watering again.
- For lawns, water lightly and frequently. Turf grass roots are short and can't "chase" water down into the soil.
- Use soaker hoses and drip irrigation.

### Use Natural Fertilizers and Pest Controls



Nurture soil and garden life that keep plants healthy. In general, organic fertilizers release their nutrients slowly over a