

# Get Involved!

- Your own property is where caring for the environment can start. Manicured lawns and gardens provide few water quality and habitat improvement opportunities.
- An inexpensive and easy way to improve water quality and species diversity on your property is to establish naturalized areas.
- You can make a difference in protecting the environment, and we would like to help you get started.



## You May Qualify For Funding

Grants are available to landowners who live in qualifying areas of our watershed to implement projects which will help improve local water quality. Grant rates and ceilings may vary between watersheds.

Eligible Items*	Grant Rate	Grant Ceiling
Riparian buffer strips, wetlands and habitat creation or protection, floodplain and fragile land retirement, connective tree planting, etc.	Up to 75%	Up to \$10,000

\* Technical advice and assistance is available to all watershed residents.

## Program Guidelines

To qualify for current funding the following criteria must be met:

- Projects must be within the eligible area.
- Projects must demonstrate an improvement to local surface and/or groundwater quality.
- The landowner must demonstrate good land stewardship practices.
- The landowner must contribute financially to the project in some capacity.
- The landowner must complete a water quality improvement application and sign a project agreement form\*.

## How To Apply For Grants

- Obtain specific program information from the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority to determine if your project qualifies.
- Complete a Water Quality Improvement Application.
- A site visit from Authority staff will be necessary to determine eligibility.
- Projects that will result in the best benefits to water quality will be prioritized for funding.
- All proposals are subject to review by an established project committee.

\* To acquire your water quality improvement application and project agreement form, please contact our local office at the address and / or number below.



250 Thorold Road West, 3rd Floor  
Welland, Ontario L3C 3W2  
Ph: 905-788-3135 Fx: 905-788-1121

[www.conservation-niagara.on.ca](http://www.conservation-niagara.on.ca)



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# Backyard Naturalization

## WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



"I am only one; but still I am one.  
I cannot do everything, but still I can do something."  
- Helen Keller

## DID YOU KNOW?

Water quality is a report card of how we are treating the land. What we do to the land will be reflected in the water around us. When it rains, water sinks into the ground dissolving pollutants from the surface. This same water makes its way to our streams and lakes and eventually into our drinking water.

Natural areas help filter pollutants from surface water. They reduce erosion, slow down flooding and help keep water flowing in our creeks and streams all year long.

By incorporating natural areas on your property with a mixture of native plants, you can easily do your part to help improve and protect local water quality and increase habitat for wildlife. Every year, over 150 species of plants and animals become extinct. You can make a difference by helping to protect wildlife populations and species diversity for future generations.

If you think protecting water quality and species diversity is someone else's problem, think again. Over 93% of the land base in the Niagara Peninsula is privately owned. If every landowner created or protected even a small piece of natural area on their property, all these little changes would add up to make a big difference in protecting the environment.



# 5 simple things you can do today to make a difference

## Give the Lawnmower a Rest

Perfectly manicured lawns lead to polluted air and water. Running a gas powered lawnmower for half an hour causes the same amount of air pollution as driving your car 560km. Manicured grass acts as "green concrete" and speeds up runoff of rainwater. This water, often loaded with fertilizers and pesticides is headed straight to the nearest creek. Rethink your lawn! Evaluate the areas on your property you are currently mowing and consider "retiring" areas that you are not actively using. You will save the time and effort required to mow while helping improve local water quality and wildlife habitat.



## Limit Fertilizer Use

Chemical lawn fertilizers and pesticides are easily dissolved into rainwater and washed away into local water courses. The nutrients they contain like nitrogen and phosphorous can cause algae blooms. When we see algae floating on ponds, rivers and lakes, most often this smelly problem is caused by the runoff from our own lawns. As urban areas increase, so do urban lawns. Twice as much fertilizer makes its way to local creeks from urban properties than from farm fields. Rethink your fertilizer use! Friendly alternatives do exist, and we can help you make better choices.



## Use Native Plants

Native plants have evolved with local climate and environmental conditions. They do not require extra watering, and do well without the application of pesticides and fertilizers. Native plants are adapted to deal with local bugs and diseases and can get all the nutrients they need from the existing soil. Many beautiful varieties of native grasses, trees, shrubs and wildflowers exist. They can be easily incorporated into your landscaping to reduce mowing, improve water quality and provide food and breeding areas for many types of birds and butterflies. Contact us to learn about the types of native plants that are best suited to your property, and to obtain lists of local suppliers.



## Increase Wildlife Habitat

Your backyard can be a wildlife haven, even if it's small. The secret to encouraging a diversity of wildlife is creating a variety of habitat features. Plant evergreens and deciduous trees, young and old, tall and short. Layer your plants so that the tallest trees are at the edge of your property and reduce in size towards your house. Even decaying and dead trees are wildlife sanctuaries. If you lack trees, build nesting boxes for birds and bats. Both are natural predators to mosquitoes. Edges provide excellent wildlife habitat and irregular ones are better than straight ones. Rock and brush piles house all sorts of toads, salamanders and rabbits. Allowing native vegetation to grow along fence and property lines will create corridors to connect natural areas. Work with your neighbours to create corridors between properties. This will help provide safe travel routes for wildlife.



## Remove Invasive Species

Invasive species are plants and animals that have been introduced into areas where they do not occur naturally. They are considered to be one of the leading causes of habitat destruction and loss of wildlife. This is because they compete with native species for food and habitat. They often have no natural predators and can completely take over an area, making it impossible for anything else to survive. Learn what invasive species are problems in your area and what they look like. Know what you are planting, so you don't add to the problem.

