

Reducing Nitrate Pollution at Home



While the majority of nitrate pollution can be attributed to massive systems like industrial agriculture and wastewater treatment, we all have the ability to reduce nitrate pollution within our own areas of influence.

Explore some of the ways that we can mitigate nutrient pollution starting at home.



Use Fertilizer Wisely

Before you fertilize your lawn, get your soil tested. This will tell you how much fertilizer your lawn or garden actually needs and what specific nutrients it is lacking. Check with your local environmental agency to see if they offer free or reduced rate soil testing.

Remember these tips when applying fertilizer:

- Look for fertilizer with slow-release nitrogen.
- Do not apply fertilizer when rain is in the forecast.
- Dispose of any leftover fertilizer properly.

Try Conservation Landscaping

Conservation landscaping uses the power of plants to improve water infiltration and remove pollutants.

Consider adopting one or more of these practices:

- **Native plants** are typically more resilient and better suited for your local environment, requiring lower inputs of fertilizer and water.
- By capturing rainwater before it becomes runoff, **rain barrels** reduce the amount of pollutants delivered to waterways.
- **Rain gardens** and **bioswales** are landscape features designed to capture rainwater, help it soak into the ground, and filter pollutants naturally.





Maintain Your Septic System

Malfunctioning septic systems are a major source of nitrate pollution in the residential setting. Wastewater contains high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus (not to mention disease-causing bacteria). Regular inspections can help identify leaks before they become serious pollution problems.

Clean Up After Pets

Manure from animal feedlots is a massive source of nitrate pollution, but all animal waste (whether it comes from a dog, cat, pig, or cow) is high in nitrogen which is converted to nitrate in water. Even worse - animal waste carries disease-causing bacteria like *E. Coli*. Always pick up after your pets!



Keep Storm Drains Clear

Plant material that washes down storm drains is another source of excess nutrients that end up in waterways. Keep leaves and grass clippings in your lawn - don't blow them into the street. Rake plant debris away from storm drains and bag them as yard waste or add them to a compost pile.

JOIN NITRATE WATCH

Want to monitor nitrate pollution in your neighborhood? Visit nitratwatch.org to request your free nitrate test kit!