

PROTECTING OUR WATER AND USING IT WISELY

Water Conservation Tips

- Water lawns and gardens only on odd or even days, depending on the street number of your house.
- Water early in the morning (before 10 am) when absorption rates are highest and evaporation rates are lowest, and calibrate sprinkler systems to deliver no more than 1 inch of water per week.
- Plant drought-resistant native species, and consider the use of a rain barrel for watering gardens and potted plants.
- Maintain your lawn organically; organic lawns require far less water than chemically-treated lawns because of their deep root systems.
- Don't leave the water running when washing cars and don't use the hose to clean your driveway or sidewalk.
- Purchase water-saving appliances and fixtures. Repair leaking faucets and toilets promptly.

Here on Long Island, water is an integral part of our environment. Our ocean shores, bays, harbors, ponds and streams provide recreation and natural beauty, while our source of drinking water lies just a few hundred feet below the surface in layers of sand and gravel, called aquifers. These aquifers were created when the earth's ice ages ended, millions of years ago.

Relative to this timeframe, it is only recently that our aquifers have become fouled by pollutants that leach through the soil. These include nitrates and microbial contamination from sewage or septic systems, pharmaceuticals, pesticides and fertilizers, gasoline and other petroleum products, dry cleaning solvents and other chemicals used by industries and homeowners. It's because of these pollutants that the aquifer layer nearest the surface is unfit for use as drinking water. Currently, we are pumping most of our water up from the Magothy Aquifer, located 200 to 800 feet below the surface.

Clean, undeveloped open land areas are essential for allowing rain and melting snow to recharge (or refill) our aquifers. As more development occurs, this natural recharging process is impeded, and rain and melting snow run off into sewer systems, dry wells and surface waters. Protecting large parcels of land from development is essential to preserving our groundwater and is one of the most important environmental issues facing all of us who call Long Island home.

Water Protection Tips

- Avoid using lawn pesticides or synthetic fertilizers; chemicals in these products leach through our sandy soil and into our aquifers. Ask your landscaper about natural or organic lawn care programs, and request low nitrogen and water insoluble organic fertilizers.
- Do not dump household chemicals, used oil or other petroleum products into soil, street drains or open bodies of water.
- Some gas stations are designated as collection sites for used automotive oil. Residents can also bring petroleum products, oil-based paints and stains and other leftover household chemicals to local hazardous waste recycling programs.
- Don't dispose of unused prescription drugs in the sink or toilet. Trace amounts of biologically active drugs have been detected in our drinking water. Your local municipality may have a program to take back and incinerate unused drugs, or you can put them into your garbage, crushing tablets or emptying capsules before throwing away.
- If your house is not connected to a public sewer, maintain your septic tank or cesspool in good repair.
- Curb pets and dispose of pet waste responsibly.

