

We All Live in a Watershed



Land is very important to the water cycle. A **WATERSHED** is any area of land that water flows across or through. Where is the water going? Downhill of course. Water in a watershed trickles and flows toward a common body of water, such as a stream, river, lake or coast. Watersheds can be big or small, but they usually have high points (like ridges) as their upper boundaries. So watersheds capture water, store it and eventually release it farther downhill.

What sort of land is your watershed made of? It's easy to find out. First you need to know if the land where you live is steep or flat.

- Steep land makes water run off in fast-moving creeks and rushing rivers.
- Flat land allows water to collect into lakes, ponds and swamps.

Now think about what happens when you dig a small hole. Do you find solid rock, fine silt or dirt that is loose and sandy?

- Loose ground (like gravel or sand) is **POROUS**, which means it has lots of little gaps that water can easily sink into. When water sinks into the ground, we call it **GROUND WATER**, and it fills an underground water supply called an **AQUIFER**.
- Tightly packed ground, like clay or solid rock, isn't very porous at all, so it's hard for water to move through. Layers like that can trap water at the surface or below ground.

Is there anything you can do to help protect your watershed? Sure there is — and one of the best places to start is in your own yard. Not allowed? Perhaps you and your friends could work on your school's yard, with permission of course. Small changes in yards can help protect your environment and keep your local water cycle healthy.



A lot of natural habitat is taken over by new housing developments. Most of these houses still have traditional grass lawns, which have been around since the olden days (1870) and became especially popular in the 1950's. **But as you might have noticed, lawn landscapes can take a lot of work and money to maintain.** Not only that, they:

- Use up space that our native plants and animals need
- Use **FERTILIZERS** and even poisons like **PESTICIDES** and **HERBICIDES** that can run off into ponds and streams, or seep down into the **GROUND WATER**

Lawns also use fresh water — lots of it.

Friendly Landscaping Principles

There's more to a yard than just grass. Click on these nine principles to learn what makes some yards more friendly than others. **Does your yard measure up?**



Right Plant, Right Place...don't grow invasive plants! They take over ☹



Water Efficiently



Fertilize Appropriately



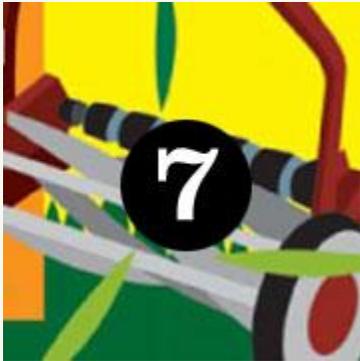
Mulch



Attract Wildlife...provide items like nest boxes, water sources like bird baths and plant native plants to increase your local wildlife habitat.



Manage Yard Pests Responsibly



Recycle



Reduce Stormwater Runoff



Protect the Water...all of our water is part of a watershed system and we get our drinking water from a water source, either groundwater (aquifer) or surface water (like Shenango Reservoir).