

# HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR STREAM

**DO...** plant trees and shrubs along your stream.

**WHY:** The roots of woody plants stabilize the banks and reduce erosion. Trees and shrubs also shade and cool the stream, which is better for fish.

**DO...** maintain or create buffer zones (the wider the better) along streams and wetlands.

**WHY:** Buffer zones absorb water and filter out lawn chemicals, fertilizers and sediment.

**DON'T...** remove native vegetation from stream banks.

**WHY:** Leaf litter from native plants is part of the aquatic food chain.

**DON'T...** mow your lawn right up to the stream.

**WHY:** Turf does not make a good buffer. It sheds water, especially on slopes, and its shallow roots do not hold the soil as well as native grasses, trees, or shrubs.

**DON'T...** throw grass clippings or yard waste into your stream—compost them.

**WHY:** Grass clippings and debris reduce oxygen in the stream, killing fish and other aquatic life.

**DO...** leave naturally occurring debris, such as fallen logs, leaves and rocks in place in your stream.

**WHY:** In-stream debris provides shelter and food for aquatic life.

**DO...** limit your use of yard fertilizers and chemicals. Maintain septic tanks in good condition.

**WHY:** Lawn chemicals and septic tank pollutants easily find their way into streams, and can kill insects, fish, frogs, birds, and plants.

**DON'T...** dump swimming pool water or soapy water directly into streams or storm sewers.

**WHY:** Storm sewers run directly into streams, where chlorine and detergents harm fish and plants.

**NEVER DUMP OIL, ANTIFREEZE OR TOXIC CHEMICALS. DISPOSE OF THESE AT APPROVED DISPOSAL CENTERS.**



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

## EVERY LITTLE STREAM COUNTS...

The stream on your property may be a spring-fed rivulet, or a real creek. All are part of a single system, feeding into the Delaware River. Even the smallest stream supports aquatic plant and animal life, and is an important part of the water cycle.

Every stream deserves to be cared for, and kept free of pollutants, to keep the whole system healthy.

## SOME HELPFUL DEFINITIONS:

A **Stream Buffer** or **Riparian Buffer** is a strip of land along a stream where trees, shrubs, and small plants are encouraged to grow. Recently scientists have learned the importance of buffers in keeping streams healthy.

The U.S. Forest Service now recommends a 50 foot buffer, free of all development, on each bank of a stream. Buffers of 300 feet or more are often used to protect the natural character of streams.

On smaller properties, aim for a minimum of 10 feet between your lawn and the stream bank. Even a single row of trees or bushes will help protect your stream.

**Native Vegetation** refers to plants that have always grown in this area. The animals in our streams use specific tree leaves for food and building material and thrive best when those species are present. Non-native plants can contribute to a buffer zone by reducing erosion, but they may be invasive, and are less well-suited to the existing food chain.

## BEAUTIFUL AND HEALTHY:

Some streamside homeowners maintain their properties by mowing their lawn up to the stream edge. This practice facilitates stream bank erosion and allows runoff to enter streams unchecked and unfiltered by native vegetation, and offers little in the form of streamside habitat for birds, pollinators, fish and other wildlife.

A buffer zone of trees, shrubs and warm and cool season native grasses and perennials will add interest to your landscape and protect your stream.

Here are some of the native species you might try:

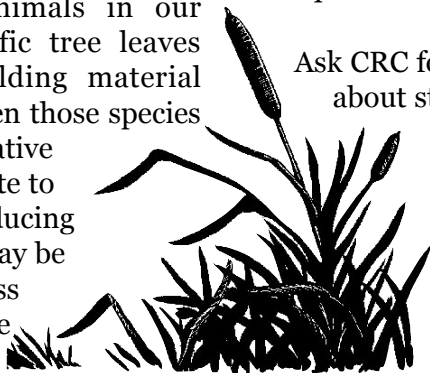
**Flowers:** *New England aster; blue vervain; cardinal flower; pink turtlehead; swamp milkweed; New York ironweed; Joe-pye weed; swamp sunflower.*

**Grasses & Sedges:** *Virginia wild rye; soft rush; switch grass 'Heavy Metal'; broom sedge; little blue stem; lurid sedge.*

**Woody Plants:** *Buttonbush; redbud or silky dogwood; spicebush; Virginia sweetspire; shadbush; red or black chokeberry; sweet pepperbush; inkberry and winterberry holly; common alder.*

**Trees:** *River birch; red maple; silver maple; ironwood; black gum; swamp white oak; silky willow.*

Ask CRC for more information about streamside plantings.



## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR STREAMS?

**We all are!** Most of us live upstream from someone else, and what we do affects others' water as well as our own. We need to work together to keep our streams clean and healthy. We are all stewards of the land.

Your township or borough is responsible for making regulations to protect the streams that run through it in compliance with state and federal regulations. These may cover development on steep slopes or flood plains, storm water management, sewers and septic tank regulations.

Most streams run through more than one jurisdiction, and protection strategies require multi-municipal cooperation. Encourage local officials in towns along your stream to cooperate to protect it.

Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association (CRC) is your local nonprofit watershed group working to monitor, clean-up and protect your local streams. CRC works in partnership with multiple municipalities to implement laws and policies and projects to protect your local water and environmental resources. CRC is member-supported and volunteer-based. For more information, visit [www.crcwatersheds.org](http://www.crcwatersheds.org) or contact us:

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