

- Researched and wrote all of these garden tips included in a green-living special



## ➤ IN THE GARDEN & OUTDOORS

- Disconnect your downspout. In a city, your eavestroughs likely drain into a downspout connected to the sewer system. Heavy rain can overtax the system, releasing sewage, oil, pesticide residues and other contaminants into lakes and rivers. Some cities will disconnect your downspout for free. Less water flowing through municipal treatment plants saves money, too.
- Use a rain barrel. Set it under your downspout to reduce the load on storm sewers and lower your utility bill. To reduce the risk of West Nile virus, buy one with a mosquito screen or simply empty the barrel twice weekly.
- Direct your downspout's outflow into low ground, then plant a bog garden of moisture-loving native plants there to provide a haven for dragonflies, frogs, toads and – if you're lucky – turtles. The North American Native Plant Society shows you how at [www.nanps.org/pdfs/downspouts.pdf](http://www.nanps.org/pdfs/downspouts.pdf).
- Conserve water. Dig compost into your flowerbeds, plant native species, and mulch around plants, shrubs and

trees. The Clean Water Foundation ([www.cleanwaterfoundation.org](http://www.cleanwaterfoundation.org)) says just five centimetres of mulch reduces a flowerbed's water requirements by 70 per cent. It also slows weed growth.

- Water wisely, if you must. Watering cans and soaker hoses waste the least. And water early in the day to prevent evaporation. Occasional, deep watering is better than frequent, light sprinkling.
- Don't use hazardous insecticides. Use alternatives such as insecticidal soap, horticultural (also called "dormant") oil,

or powders containing pyrethrins. Even these can kill or harm desirable insects and plants; use sparingly and with care.

**TIP:** Find easy, eco-smart solutions at Environment Canada ([www.qc.ec.gc.ca/ecotrucs/solutionsvertes/insects.htm](http://www.qc.ec.gc.ca/ecotrucs/solutionsvertes/insects.htm)).

- Try companion planting. If you plant chives among roses, the former will help keep aphids away from the latter.

**CHECK IT OUT:** Find more ideal couples at [www.sheridannurseries.com](http://www.sheridannurseries.com); click on Gardening Information, then Garden Tips.

- Select native species. Naturally suited to your area, native species require little care and provide food and habitat for butterflies, birds and other wildlife. Buy only nursery-cultivated plants, and don't dig native species from the wild.
- Avoid invasive imports (including pond fish and plants) and never release any into the wild. Learn more at Hinterland Who's Who ([www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?id=220](http://www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?id=220)).
- Plant a tree and clean the air; cool the summer heat; increase the quiet, beauty and privacy in your yard; and provide wildlife habitat. Some municipalities offer a rebate for every tree you plant. Tree Canada ([www.treecanada.ca/publications/guide.htm](http://www.treecanada.ca/publications/guide.htm)) has tips. ▶



➤ Save a tree!  
Visit the Canadian Marketing Association's website ([www.the-cma.org](http://www.the-cma.org)) and click on Do Not Contact Service to take your name off junk-mail lists.



- Large swathes of any single species of plants attract pests and diseases; a mix not only stays healthier, it is more interesting and supports a greater variety of living creatures. Learn more from Environment Canada ([www.cbin.ec.gc.ca/education/whatcan.cfm](http://www.cbin.ec.gc.ca/education/whatcan.cfm)).

- Welcome beneficial creatures. The Canadian Wildlife Federation tells you how with instructions for ponds, bird and bat houses, toad shelters and snake dens ([www.wildaboutgardening.org/index.asp](http://www.wildaboutgardening.org/index.asp)). Birds and bats help control the pesky-insect population, and your junior naturalists will love to spot frogs, salamanders and worms.

- Don't burn yard debris. Hazardous, smoke particulates stay in the air for days. Compost instead.

- Recycle garden and kitchen waste by composting to halve garbage and reduce greenhouse gases from landfills. Compost adds nutrients to the soil, makes it more porous and less likely to erode, and boosts the beneficial organisms it can support. And it's free!

**CHECK IT OUT:** The website of the **Composting Council of Canada** ([www.compost.org](http://www.compost.org)) has lots of advice.

- Use a peat alternative. Extraction of peat destroys ancient wetlands that filter groundwater, prevent flooding and support wildlife that includes rare species and migrating birds. To help your soil hold moisture, use coir (coconut fibre). To boost the acid content, dig in shredded cedar bark or evergreen needles.

- Sow drought-tolerant and disease-resistant grass; don't water established lawns during dry spells; let mown grass lie to nourish the earth and conserve moisture; and leave any clover (its roots add nitrogen to the soil). Top-dress with compost, reseed bald spots, rake out thatch and keep mower blades sharp and set at least 6.5 centimetres (2½ inches) aboveground, says Greenpeace ([www.greenpeace.org/usa/news/green-living-guide/in-your-yard](http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/news/green-living-guide/in-your-yard)).

- Use clippers, rakes and push mowers instead of power trimmers, blowers and mowers. It's more efficient and less expensive, and you'll get some exercise as you enjoy a quiet, clean atmosphere. ●