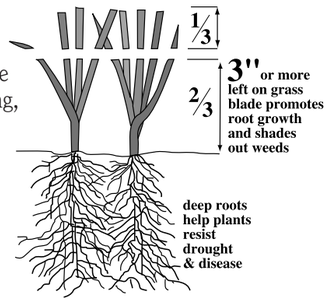
Earth-Friendly Lawn Care Tips

- **Don't guess…soil test! –** Contact MSU Oakland County Extension and purchase a soil test box. Ask for the organic matter test as well as the test for basic nutrients. For information, contact the Oakland County Garden Hotline: 248-858-0902.
- **Mow high and let the clippings lie –** Set the mower blade at the highest setting, leaving 2-1/2 to 3 inches on the grass blade. Tall grass encourages deep roots and shades out some weeds. If you mulch your grass, you can reduce fertilizer quantities by 25% or more each year.



- **Select earth-friendly fertilizers –** Fertilizers with slow-release nitrogen and low or no phosphorus are recommended.
- **Sweep fertilizer from paved surfaces back onto the lawn –** Fertilizer left on sidewalks and driveways can easily wash into storm drains, the Rouge River, and nearby lakes.
- **Avoid weed-and-feed combination products –** Combination products often add unnecessary herbicides to the landscape. A better approach is to identify the weed and selectively spot treat – or dig weeds by hand.

Benefits of Compost For Soil Health and Water Quality

- Increases the ability of sandy soils to hold water.
- Enhances the permeability of clay soil.
- Slowly releases nutrients.
- Prevents soil erosion.
- Helps curtail some plant diseases and pests.
- Degrades petroleum products and other pollutants.

Web Sites
FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SE Oakland County Water Authority (SOCWA)
www.socwa.org/lawn_and_garden.htm
SOCWA website topics: healthy lawns, rain gardens, naturescaping, tree care, composting, and more

Oakland County Water Resources Office
www.oakgov.com/water

Alliance of Rouge Communities
www.allianceofrougecommunities.com
(includes map of subwatersheds and Rouge video)

Friends of the Rouge
www.therouge.org

Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project
www.rougeriver.com

Auburn Hills – **www.auburnhills.org**
Beverly Hills – **www.villagebeverlyhills.com**
Bingham Farms – **www.binghamfarms.org**
Birmingham – **www.ci.birmingham.mi.us**
Bloomfield Hills – **www.bloomfieldhills.mi.net**
Bloomfield Township – **www.bloomfieldtwp.org**
Farmington Hills – **www.fhgov.com**
Franklin – **www.franklin.mi.us**
Lathrup Village – **www.lathrupvillage.org**
Pontiac – **www.pontiac.mi.us**
Rochester Hills – **www.rochesterhills.org**
Southfield – **www.cityofsouthfield.com**
Troy – **www.troymi.gov**
West Bloomfield – **www.twp.west-bloomfield.mi.us**

Look for the bright green label at local retailers. For a list of recommended fertilizers and participating retailers, see www.socwa.org.

Brochure prepared by SOCWA, Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority, 3910 W. Webster, Royal Oak, MI. 248-288-5150; www.socwa.org. Funded through a grant from the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Program, under U.S. EPA Grant #XP995743-09.

LD-1279

Tips For A Rouge-Friendly Landscape

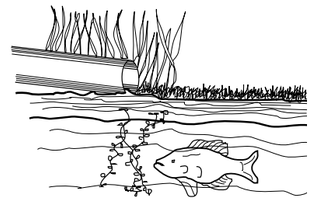
Rouge River
MAIN 1-2 Subwatershed
OURS TO PROTECT

Distributed by Rouge River municipalities, Main 1-2 Subwatershed
Auburn Hills • Beverly Hills • Bingham Farms • Birmingham • Bloomfield Hills • Bloomfield Township • Farmington Hills Franklin • Lathrup Village • Pontiac • Rochester Hills • Southfield • Southfield Township • Troy • West Bloomfield Township

WHERE POLLUTION IS CONCERNED, EVERY HOME IS WATERFRONT PROPERTY!

Storm water runoff from lawns, gardens, driveways, and rooftops contributes to the pollution of the Rouge River and nearby lakes. Water from rains and sprinkler systems picks up soil, fertilizer, pesticide, oil, leaves, grass clippings, and other materials. Water then flows into storm drains which discharge to the Rouge River.

Runoff containing phosphorus and nitrogen is a particular concern for the Rouge River in Oakland County. Excess amounts of these nutrients can become sources of pollution.



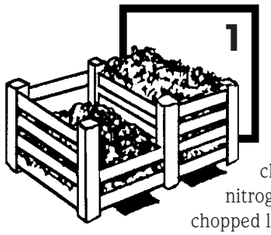
Yard Waste Management Tips

Why not compost, mulch, and recycle yard clippings? Follow the tips below to ensure a healthy watershed!

- **Compost your clippings –** Mix leaves and grass clippings with soil and water in a backyard compost bin. Use the finished compost as a soil amendment, natural fertilizer or top-dressing around plants. Compost used in the home landscape holds water and helps filter pollutants. For how-to-do-it tips, see www.socwa.org.
- **Mulch your leaves –** Chop or shred leaves with your mower. Leaf mulch can be used around ornamental plants, shrubs, and trees. Mulch reduces the need for watering and weeding and gradually contributes organic matter to the soil. In the fall, mow dry leaves and let the fragments remain on the lawn where they will contribute organic matter and nutrients to the soil.
- **"Bag It" –** If you have extra leaves and grass clippings, place at curb for yard waste pickup. Contact your local DPW Office for pickup requirements.

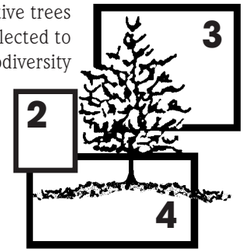
Rouge River Main 1-2 Subwatershed communities are working together to promote earth-friendly landscape practices to protect the Rouge River Watershed and local waterways.

PLAN YOUR HOME LANDSCAPE IN HARMONY WITH NATURE



Backyard compost pile made by layering and mixing grass clippings ("green", nitrogen material), chopped leaves ("brown", carbon material), soil, and water.

Diverse native trees and shrubs selected to enhance biodiversity and reduce maintenance.



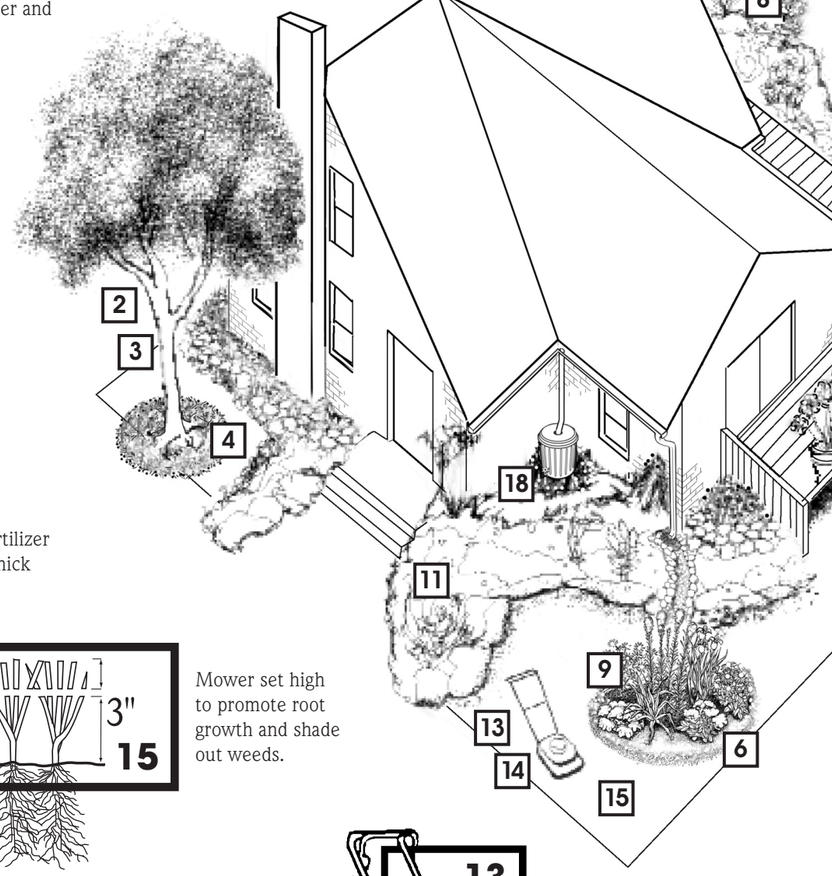
Trees selected which are suited to site conditions.

Natural organic mulch applied in a 2-3 inch layer enhances tree health.

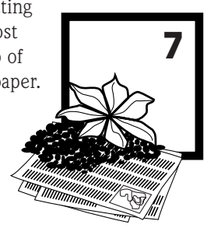
Plants with similar watering needs clustered together — conserving water and saving time.

Vegetables, herbs, and flowers interplanted and rotated to discourage garden pests and diseases. Soil tested for nutrients and organic matter before selecting a fertilizer.

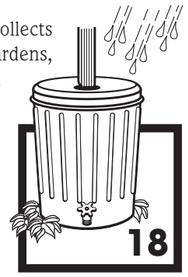
Compost used as a top-dressing and slow-release fertilizer in flower beds. Shredded leaves, shredded bark, and other natural mulches used to conserve moisture and reduce weeds.



Grass smothered and new garden created by putting compost on top of newspaper.

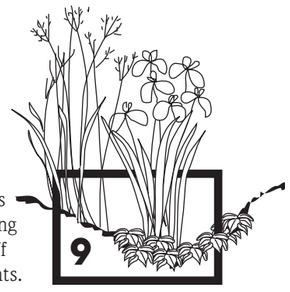


Rain barrel collects rainwater for gardens, reducing peak flow runoff to storm drains.



Butterfly garden planted with sun-loving native wildflowers.

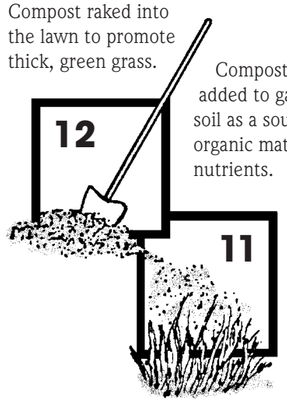
Earth-friendly fertilizer used to build a thick green lawn.



Rain garden with native wildflowers planted in low-lying area to trap runoff and filter pollutants.

Mower set high to promote root growth and shade out weeds.

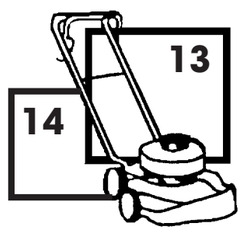
Compost raked into the lawn to promote thick, green grass.



Compost added to garden soil as a source of organic matter and nutrients.

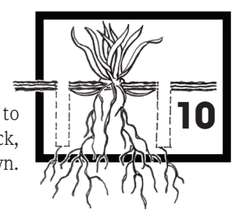
Weeds pulled by hand, eliminating the need for herbicides.

Mulching mower used to return fine-cut clippings to the lawn, reducing the need for fertilizer and yard waste collection.



Mulching mower used to shred Fall leaves. Small pieces sift into the lawn, minimizing bagging and contributing nutrients to the soil.

Lawn aerated to encourage a thick, healthy lawn.



TIPS FOR USING COMPOST

Compost is called gardener's gold because it enhances the productivity and fertility of soil. When used on a sustained basis over several years, compost provides a reservoir of nutrients for plants.

- **SOIL ENRICHMENT**
  Dig 2 to 4 inches of compost into the soil before planting. If only a small amount is available, place a handful of compost in each planting hole.
- **FLOWER AND VEGETABLE GARDENS**
  Spread compost in a 2 to 3 inch layer around plants. Compost helps conserve moisture in sandy soils, enhances the permeability of clay soils, suppresses some soil-borne diseases, prevents soil erosion, and reduces pollutants carried by stormwater.
- **TREES AND SHRUBS**
  Use compost as a mulch around the base of trees and shrubs (2 to 4 inch depth), extending out beyond the tree branches. When used in this way, compost provides essential nutrients to small roots near the surface of the ground.
- **LAWN**
  Spread ½ inch of compost over an established lawn in the Fall or Spring. Rake the compost into the lawn, leaving half of the grass blade exposed to sunlight. Before installing a new lawn, mix compost into the soil to a depth of six inches.
- **CONTAINERS**
  Mix compost with potting soil in a 50 – 50 ratio.