



## Yard Waste, Wetlands & Water

*Each of us plays a part in protecting our local lakes, streams, and wetlands. When we work together to be good neighbors and water stewards, we can ensure local waters are healthy for generations to come.*



### What do we mean by yard waste?

Leaves, grass, and other natural debris such as brush may seem harmless, but they contain phosphorus that pollutes our local waters. Dumping this organic material into ditches, ponds, and wetlands has a negative impact on our community. These materials cause algae growth, lower the water's oxygen, and can even cause flooding.

**Under Minnesota state law, dumping into wetlands and waterways, including slopes that drain to waterways, is illegal.**



### How does yard waste impact local waters?

- Yard waste **clogs waterways** such as ditches and culverts. This increases flooding risk.
- Yard waste **pollutes waters** through excessive nutrients. Phosphorus in leaves and grass clippings produces excessive algae, which harms water quality and aquatic life.
- Yard waste can **choke out native plants and wildlife**, creating lasting negative impacts on soil. Invasive species such as cattails and reed canary grass often take advantage of these changes, potentially limiting the wetland's natural function and diversity.



### What does responsible yard waste disposal look like?

- **Mulch leaves** into the yard or **keep grass clippings on the lawn** for a natural fertilizer.
- **Bag leaves and/or grass clippings.** From there, you can bring them to a Ramsey County yard waste facility or contract a yard waste hauler for curbside pick-up.
- **Compost yard waste at home.** Make sure you keep compost piles in designated bins at least 40 feet from ponds, shorelines, and wetlands. To help absorb any excess nutrients, surround compost with native vegetation when possible.
  - Note that distance requirements vary depending on the size of the wetland. Contact your municipality or VLAWMO for details on specific wetlands or fill requirements.



**Working to protect and improve water and natural resources in the watershed.**

**Visit our website for more information on ways you can protect our local waters.**

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