

# Community Partners for Clean Streams Monthly eMonitor



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## Up Front

The eMonitor is designed to keep our Partners and friends updated on CPCS, stormwater management issues, provide helpful information to reduce stormwater and nonpoint source pollution, recognize new Partners, highlight upcoming events, and create networking opportunities. We hope you enjoy each edition of the Monthly eMonitor and welcome any comments, concerns, or suggestions.

## Organic Gardening is Easier than You Think

Organic gardening often conjures up images of a messy lawn and garden riddled with dandelions and other weeds. Some may even think it is a complicated process that means more manual labor and time working in the yard.

In fact, organic simply means gardening with no synthetic fertilizers, pesticides or chemicals. The main focus is on soil health and choosing the right plants for your site. This means a healthier landscape that often thrives with the same or slightly more effort than a non-organic garden.



Adding chemicals and even fertilizers to your lawn and garden can be detrimental to water quality and the environment. Excess nutrient inputs often end up in the nearest waterway reducing water quality and killing aquatic plants and organisms.

Pesticides can hurt more than they help. They are poisons that often eliminate more than the intended species. Pesticides also end up in local waterways where they are detrimental to both ecosystems and human health.

This issue focuses on organic gardening and how to apply the principles to your business and home.



## Composting – You have Everything You Need

Compost is the key to enhancing soil. It is a nutrient rich blend of materials created from a specific mixture of plant materials. It adds essential nutrients to soil to make it more suitable for growing plants. If you have soil that contains a large percentage of clay, rocks, sand or other undesirable materials, adding compost can significantly improve your soil's health. Even healthy soil can benefit from a periodic recharge of nutrients.

There are many ways to make compost, it is easy to do and you most likely have everything you need in your business or home kitchen and garden to create it. Using kitchen scraps and garden waste to make compost prevents these beneficial materials from ending up in landfills.

Creating a composting program at the office is a great method of demonstrating a company's commitment to water quality and the environment. Employees can participate in environmental activities beyond recycling. The finished product can be used for landscaping on site or for employees to utilize at home.



### **Composting Tips**

- Make your own compost bins with recycled pallets. Small, easy to use compost bins can also be purchased from your local garden center. There are many models available today that are small and manageable.
- Never add pet waste, meat/fish scraps or disease infected plant matter to your compost pile.
- Bag and save your leaves in the fall to add as “brown” material throughout the year.
- Lay leaves on landscaped areas or garden after harvest to begin composting for the winter. In the spring, till the leaves into the soil as added organic material.
- Finished compost should smell sweet and earthy, and be the same temperature as the outside air.
- For a complete guide to composting, visit [Composting in Washtenaw County](#).

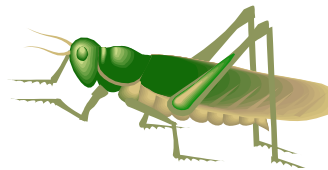
## Mulching for Soil Health

Adding natural mulch to your landscaped areas is another way to add nutrients to the soil. It eventually decomposes, and adds to fertility. It reduces weeds, retains soil moisture, stabilizes temperatures, reduces soil compaction and controls insects and diseases. With all of these benefits, it is a practical and cost effective addition to any landscape.



### **Mulching Tips**

- Use leaves as mulch around plants in your garden
- Mulch layer should be thick enough to discourage weed growth, but not so thick it deprives the soil of oxygen.
- Use pine needles around acid loving plants.
- Make your own mulch after trimming or downing trees in your yard with a wood chipper.
- Many communities offer free mulch from their own tree trimming activities. Check with your municipality for availability.



## Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a way to control pests without chemicals. It is not as complicated as it sounds! It is simply a tiered method of preventing pests from infesting your home and garden, rather than using chemicals to eradicate them. It is much easier to prevent pests than eliminate them later, so this method focuses on eliminating entries, nesting places and sustenance so they can not survive.

### **Principles of IPM**

- “Pests” are a natural part of the environment and should be tolerated on some level, particularly if they are not dangerous to human health.
- Tailor your action to the specific pest species. What works for ants may not work for spiders, so it is important to know precisely what you are dealing with.
- Prevent pests indoors: Keep trash bins sealed, clean and away from the building. Clean up spills immediately and seal all food containers. Trim trees and bushes near the building and seal all cracks, vents and holes.
- Prevent pests outdoors: Select plants suitable to your site, use mulch (see below) and keep outdoor living spaces clean. Attract natural predators to your garden such as lady bugs, praying mantises, spiders and bats.

For more information on IPM, see the Community Partners for Clean Streams eMonitor [Volume 2, Number 5](#) or contact us for a comprehensive packet on Integrated Pest Management.

## Additional Organic Gardening Tips



- Have your soil tested to determine what nutrients you are lacking. CPCS will provide a kit for partners. The MSU Extension office located in the Western Services Center provides this service. Contact them at 734-997-1678 or [msuextension@ewashtenaw.org](mailto:msuextension@ewashtenaw.org) for more information.
- Let the grass grow high to 2.5-3 inches. This makes the lawn healthier, and even helps choke out weeds that don't like to grow in the shade.
- Have your lawn service contractor leave grass clippings on the lawn. It becomes a natural fertilizer for the soil and stays out of landfills.
- Have your lawn service contractor mulch leaves directly onto the grass. Let leaves stay on the grass and using a mulching mower to provide additional nutrients for the lawn. Plus you avoid the back-breaking work of raking leaves and hauling them off your property.
- Choose native plants that are well adapted to your location, site and weather conditions. They require less nutrient input, time and money.
- Reduce the area of large lawns by creating raised beds for flower or for vegetable gardens at home.
- Diversifying your lawn and garden will attract birds, butterflies and wildlife. This is a wonderful educational opportunity for your family, business and community.
- If you are unable to create your own compost pile, packaged compost can be purchased at garden and home improvement centers.

## [CPCS News](#)

### **Upcoming Community Partner Events**

#### **Rouge River Rescue**

Saturday, June 3, 2006. This annual event takes place in many locations along the Rouge River. Community Partners for Clean Streams will be at the Johnson Creek location in Northfield Township for stream side planting activities.

#### **Salem Township Flag Day Celebration**

Saturday, June 10, 2006. The annual flag day celebration includes a parade, information booths and many other fun activities for the whole family! Community Partners for Clean Streams will be hosting a booth with water quality information and stamping activities for kids. The event begins at 11:00 am. It will be a lot of fun so be sure to bring the whole family!



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