

# Homeowners Guide to Protecting Ponds and Wetlands

Weston has several small ponds throughout town. Most of these ponds were originally man-made either by building a dam (i.e. Hobbs Pond and College Pond) or by dredging an area along a stream. Weston's ponds provide habitat for numerous birds, fish, turtles, frogs, and mammals. Because these ponds are often shallow, controlling aquatic plants from over-taking them can be a challenge. Several Weston homeowners have hired professionals to prepare and implement pond management programs. These programs often involve hand removal and/or chemical treatment to control nuisance or invasive aquatic plants. However, it's important for pond abutters to know that they too directly affect pond health and water quality. This brochure lists several ways homeowners can help protect Weston's ponds and wetlands.

## 1. Nature likes it Messy

Some people want to "clean up" nature to create a park like appearance. However, wildlife often needs thick tangles of undergrowth, leaf litter, and deadwood to survive. Aquatic plants are a vital part of any healthy pond and wetland ecosystem. Plants and algae provide many benefits to the pond: roots help to prevent muddy water by stabilizing the pond bottom and banks. Pond plants use nutrients that may be taken up by nuisance algae. The stems, roots, and leaves of pond plants serve as important wildlife habitat for small pond animals such as dragonfly nymphs, tadpoles, and crayfish. If you are concerned that there are too



many nuisance plants or algae growing in your pond, the law requires that you speak to the Conservation Commission prior to doing any vegetation removal or chemical treatments within or near the pond.

## 2. Go Green with your Lawn

A super-green, lush carpet of grass that's the envy of your neighbors can cause big water quality problems. Because fertilizers and pesticides applied in excess are washed to rivers, ponds, and wetlands, limiting their use can make a big difference. Even better, convert manicured lawn to natural meadow, beds of native perennials, and shrubs, or forest.

**Kill Insects with Kindness** - Or at least keep them away with natural deterrents. A list of non-chemical, natural insect repellants is available at: [www.eartheasy.com/live\\_natpest\\_control.htm](http://www.eartheasy.com/live_natpest_control.htm)

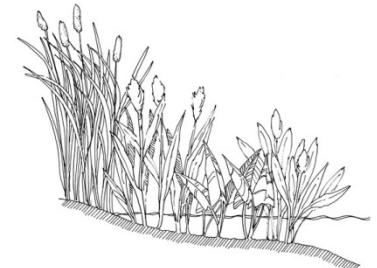
**Fight Weed with Eco-Friendly Herbicides** - Try Deadeye (a vinegar-based formula) and WOW nitrogen fertilizer made from corn gluten. Pour boiling water or white vinegar on smaller weeds (i.e. walkway cracks).

**Go Native** - When landscaping your property, use native species (plants indigenous to Massachusetts) whenever possible. They require less water than grass does, because they have deeper roots and can store more water. Growing native plants can save more than half the water normally used to care for outdoor plants, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council. Also, many of these species provide food and cover for local wildlife, providing a sanctuary from suburban sprawl. For more information, see: [www.greenscapes.org](http://www.greenscapes.org) and [www.grownativemass.org](http://www.grownativemass.org).



## 3. Protect Ponds & Wetlands by Planting and keeping Native Plants Around Them.

If you live on the banks of a pond or adjacent to a wetland, a natural vegetative buffer is particularly important to prevent runoff from going directly into these waters. Planting a strip of native plants next to water bodies and wetlands will help keep the water clean, provide habitat for wildlife, and protect against flooding.



#### 4. Don't let those creatures go (info about invasive animals and plants)

Although exotic animals can be great pets and ornamental plants can make beautiful decorations, many of these species are invasive. In fact, some of the characteristics that make these species desirable, like hardiness and rapid growth, are the same characteristics that allow them to out-compete native plants and animals in the wild. So never release aquarium pets, Koi, or bait fish into the water.

#### 5. Plant a Rain Garden

Locate it in a natural low spot where it can intercept runoff from hard surfaces such as streets, driveways and walkways. Keep it at least 15 feet away from building foundations. For more information, check out: <http://www.raingardennetwork.com>.

#### 6. Compost Yard Waste

A lot of people think that because grass clippings, brush, and other yard waste are 'natural', it is ok to dump huge piles in the woods or wetlands. However, dumped yard waste destroys the underlying vegetation and wildlife habitat; and prohibits new trees and shrubs from growing. Leaf dumping near water bodies has resulted in flooding problems upstream. Roadside ditches, used to remove road run off, can get clogged from leaves dumped there by residents and landscapers. Weston residents may bring their yard waste including grass, leaves, and brush to the Transfer Station off of Church Street during normal business hours  
The Composting Facility (Brush Dump) on Merriam Street is open on select dates.

#### 7. Scoop the Poop

It's a dirty job, but if you don't do it, you're directly contributing to local water quality problems. Pet waste contains parasites that can cause human (and pet) health problems and be harmful to our wetlands and streams. Please pick up after your pet and never throw pet waste into a storm drain or waterway.



#### 8. Don't be a Drip

Oil, gasoline, and antifreeze from cars, trucks, lawnmowers, and boats are highly toxic to wildlife. If you notice a leak, fix it immediately to keep these toxins from polluting our waterways.

#### 8. Drain Swimming Pools wisely

Never drain pool or hot tub water directly into a body of water. The best option is to discharge chlorinated water over landscaping using the following steps: (1) shut off the chlorination system or stop adding chlorine one week before draining pool water; (2) make sure the pH level is between 6.5 and 8.5, the normal pH range of surface and ground waters; and (3) Drain pool water where it will not flow directly into a street, gutter, or a wetland, stream, or pond.

#### 9. Maintain your Septic System

Choose commercial drain cleaners carefully as many may be harmful to the groundwater and to your leach field. When septic systems are not pumped routinely, the leach field may become clogged and added nutrients may reach wetlands and ponds. Contact the Board of Health for more information about your septic system (781-786-5030).

#### 10. Ponds and Wetlands are Wonderful!

Ponds and wetlands are valuable because they reduce flooding, provide wildlife habitat, help recharge aquifers, and filter polluted water. Wetlands may not be wet all the time. Low areas that flood in the spring may be wetlands. All kinds of wetlands are protected by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. Over 25% of Weston falls under wetland regulations (so your property may, too). Always contact your Conservation Commission before you conduct work (i.e. clearing, cutting, grading, and filling) near wetlands, ponds, streams, and flood zones (781-786-5068).

