

Your Garden and Lake Champlain



The Vermont and New York Master Gardener Programs, supported by the University of Vermont and Cornell Extension and Lake Champlain Sea Grant, support the objectives of the Lake Champlain Management Plan and Basin Program. This factsheet is intended to help prevent or reduce pollution coming from residences within the Lake Champlain Basin.

Lake waters are the heart of our region

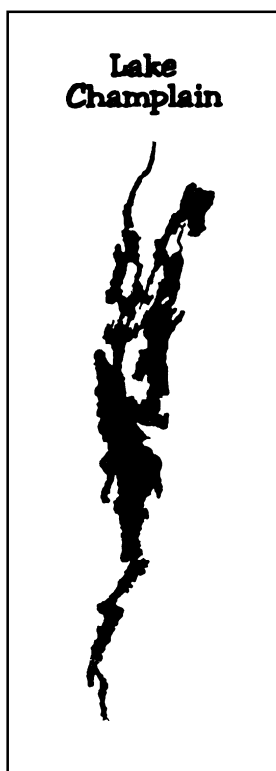
Water quality in any area affects the quality of your life. Streams, rivers, and storm drains are direct connections from your yard to Lake Champlain. What you do in your yard contributes to clean or polluted lake, stream, river, and groundwaters. **Lake-friendly gardening** practices can improve water quality while helping you maintain a better garden.

Garden practices affect water quality

There are hundreds of thousands of homes with gardens and lawns in Vermont, New York, and Canada that potentially contribute runoff to Lake Champlain. Although each may contribute a relatively small amount of runoff containing soil, chemicals, and fertilizers, they add up to a sizable problem. Runoff from lawns and gardens contributes to pollution that will be controlled only when individuals take responsibility and make wise choices.

Many lakes are in trouble

Lake Champlain suffers from some of the same nutrient pollution problems as the Great Lakes. The Lake Champlain Management Conference recently identified excess phosphorus as a priority threat to water quality in the lake. Phosphorus can come from many sources, and a broad range of efforts is underway to reduce the load of this nutrient entering the lake. In addition, some areas of the lake may suffer from increased sedimentation, nitrogen enrichment, and entry of toxic compounds in urban storm water runoff.



We have long been aware of pollution from “point” sources, such as factories and sewage treatment plants. We have recently become more aware of the threat of “nonpoint source pollution” (or NPS), such as storm water runoff. This is pollution created by many relatively small and widespread sources. By themselves, each of these sources may seem insignificant, but added together they pose a serious threat.

Everyone lives in a watershed

With each rain or snow, almost every square inch of the region contributes to the water flow into Lake Champlain. Rivers, streams, groundwater, gutters, storm and sanitary sewer systems, hills, and bottomlands are all part of the system.

Everyone lives on a stream

Whether our stream is a natural channel or a constructed one, such as a storm sewer, the effect is still the same. Eroding soil and the runoff or leaching of fertilizers and chemicals have an impact on our lakes, streams, and bays. Most storm sewer water drains into the lakes or groundwater untreated. Even sewage treatment does not remove all pollutants.

Whatever is poured, spread, or sprayed on plants or the ground can find its way into the lakes or groundwa-

ter. Just because a problem flows away from the property does not mean it is eliminated.

Lake-friendly gardening

This is a program to integrate good gardening practices with good water-quality practices. The same simple, practical techniques that improve the soil, beautify the landscape, and reduce maintenance time and cost can also protect the quality of our water and Lake Champlain. **Lake-friendly gardening** not only can add to the value of your property and the pleasure derived from it, but also contribute to a cleaner lake.

Remember: The key to **lake-friendly gardening** is to reduce the amount of potential contaminants, fertilizers, and pesticides introduced into the environment and to minimize the amount of water that runs off your property.

Master Gardener Program

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