



Seneca Lake **PURE WATERS** Association

A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE TO

# Lake Friendly Living



PRACTICES TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT SENECA LAKE WATER QUALITY

# Love the Lake!

## Your Guide to Lake Friendly Living

### What happens around your home matters...

As one of over 100,000 residents who use Seneca Lake as a primary water source, you can make a difference in the water quality of Seneca Lake. The Seneca Lake watershed encompasses over 457 square miles where storm water runoff moves into the lake and impacts its water quality. Residential properties can generate runoff.

### What is storm water runoff?

Rain that falls on natural surfaces is infiltrated into the ground. Rain that falls on impermeable surfaces, such as roof tops, paved surfaces, etc. cannot soak into the ground and moves across these surfaces carrying sediment and pollutants with it into the lake.

### How is Seneca Lake quality affected by sediment and pollutants?

Sediments can cloud water affecting lake plants, fish, and other aquatic life. Sediments can form deltas that impede navigation and lake access. Sediments can create habitats where invasive species thrive. Pollutants include excess nutrients, bacteria, pathogens and debris that can make water unsafe for drinking and swimming and disrupt healthy aquatic life.

### What can YOU do?

You can adopt Lake Friendly Living practices! These practices are focused on three key ways to help protect Seneca Lake:

#### Eliminate Pollutants



#### Minimize Runoff



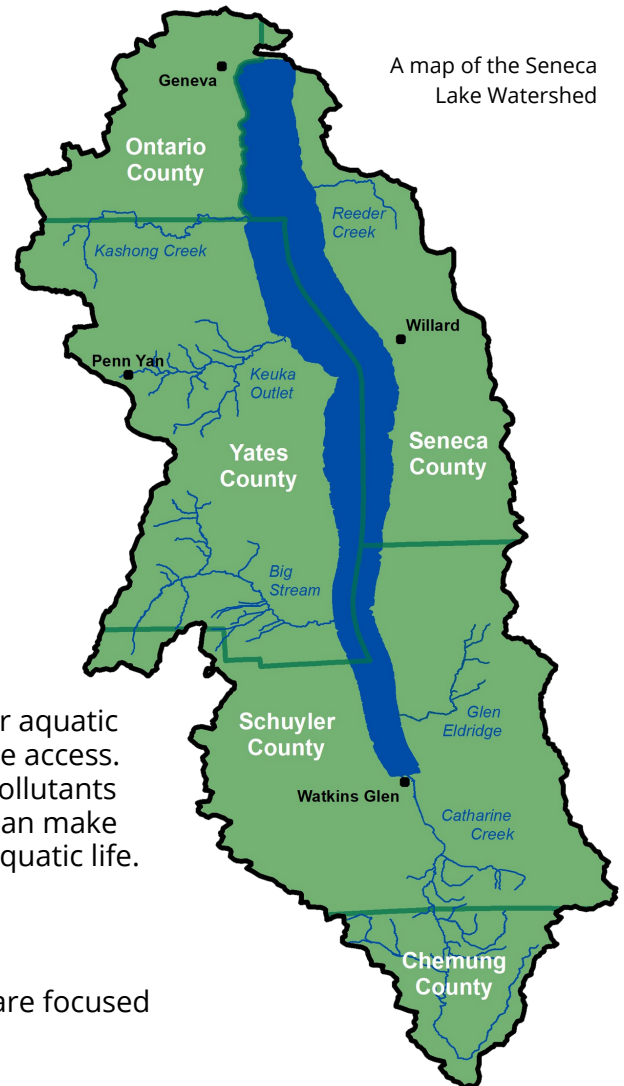
#### Capture and Infiltrate



### Show your support for Lake Friendly Living!

Put a Lake Friendly Living sign in your yard, or on your door or car. Talk with neighbors and residents about what you are doing and the simple things they can do to help protect and preserve Seneca Lake.

Share your results. Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association wants to recognize your efforts and share your story. Please send photos and your story to [info@senecalake.org](mailto:info@senecalake.org).



A map of the Seneca Lake Watershed



The Seneca Lake Friendly Living program is designed to help you learn and apply a level of practices that best suit your situation and abilities.

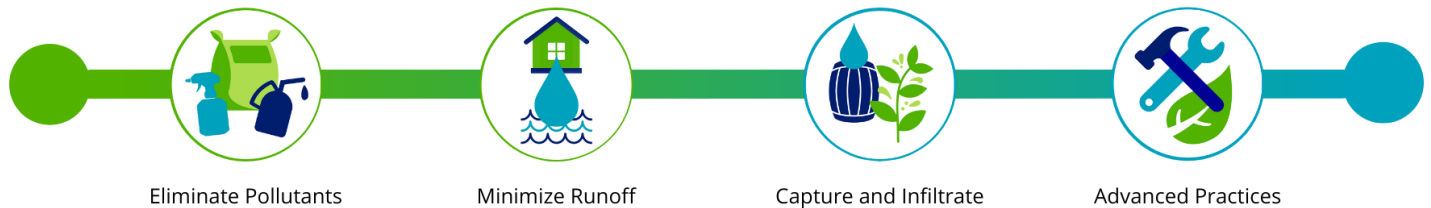
The program includes two levels of basic and advanced practices:

## Start with your Pledge

Take the pledge to adopt basic practices that will help reduce or eliminate pollutants and minimize runoff.

## Become a Lake Steward

Invest in gardening and landscape projects that can increase the positive impact on the watershed and lake quality.



This guide is divided into three sections. The sections guide you through basic to advanced best practices to be lake friendly.

- 1. Basic Practices.** Learn about basic best practices to eliminate pollutants and minimize runoff related to:
  - Lawncare
  - Hazardous Waste
  - Vehicle Maintenance
  - Septic Maintenance
  - Water use
- 2. Advanced Practices.** Learn about advanced practices to capture and infiltrate water and reduce runoff related to:
  - Permanent landscape improvements
  - Reduction of impermeable surfaces
  - Erosion control with new construction
- 3. Prevent Invasive Species.** Learn how the simple steps of Clean, Drain, Dry can prevent transference of aquatic invasive species.

There is an abundance of information available to help you get started and progress. We encourage you to visit our website for resources and ways to learn more about Lake Friendly Living and getting involved to preserve, protect and promote Seneca Lake.

If we all commit and practice Lake Friendly Living, we can all enjoy the beauty and health of Seneca Lake for years to come. Visit our website [www.senecalake.org/lakefriendlyliving](http://www.senecalake.org/lakefriendlyliving).

*Anything you can do matters!*





# Section One

## Take The Pledge



### Eliminate Pollutants

Eliminate pollutants at the source

- Know your soil's needs.**
  -  Test soil then feed only if needed.
- Apply phosphorus free fertilizer at the recommended rate** (see footnote about phosphorus-free fertilizer and NYS law).
  -  Fall is the best season to fertilize.
  -  Don't fertilize before a storm or to frozen ground.
  -  Consider skipping the fertilizer and build healthy lawn soil with mulched leaves and compost.
- Mow higher** - 2.5 to 3 inches (6.4 to 7.6 cm). This is healthier for your lawn and impacts runoff too.
- Cover bare spots.**
- Scoop dog poop** - Flush it or place it in the trash.
- Keep soil, leaves and lawn clippings out of the street, ditches, storm drains, streams and the lake.** Instead, place in paper bag, compost, or leave on lawn as a natural fertilizer.




**Footnote:** In 2012, NYS enacted a law that requires phosphorus-free fertilizer be used on all lawns unless establishing a new lawn or soil test shows that additional phosphorus is required. Learn more at [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/67239.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/67239.html)

## Reduce Household Hazardous Waste and Chemicals

These are any wastes or chemicals that are **flammable, toxic, corrosive, or reactive**, such as gasoline, oil, solvents, paints, paint thinners, pesticides, cleaners, batteries, and prescription drugs.

- Use smallest amounts possible.
- Use non-toxic, biodegradable products when possible.
- Follow instructions on labels.
- Store properly to prevent leaks or spills.
- Dispose hazardous waste at collection sites and events (see footnote).
- Do not flush prescription drugs (see footnote).

 Dispose at collection sites or in trash after mixing with ashes, dirt, cat litter, or coffee grounds, and sealing in a plastic bag or container.

## Maintain Vehicles, Watercraft, and Other Recreational Vehicles

- Prevent fluids leaking onto driveways or roads. Change oil with a pan to catch drips. Use an absorbent material to wipe up spills and dispose properly.
- Wash vehicles on the lawn vs. impermeable surfaces or use a car wash facility. Soapy water contains chemicals that can harm fish and water quality.



Footnote: For a list of collection sites, please visit [www.senecalake.org/lakefriendlyliving](http://www.senecalake.org/lakefriendlyliving).

# Section One

## Take The Pledge



### Eliminate Pollutants

Eliminate pollutants at the source

#### Maintain Septic System

Regularly inspect and pump

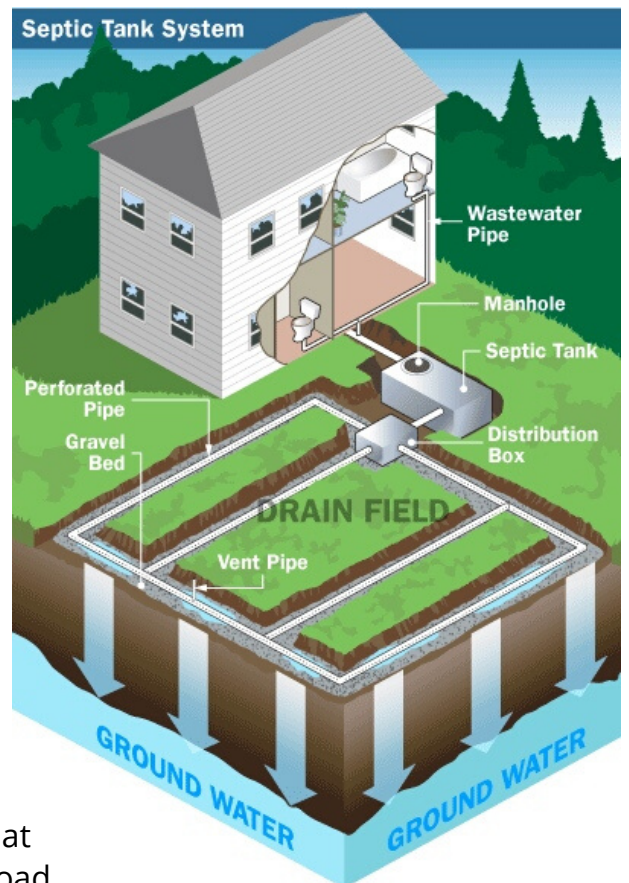
- Inspect every 2 to 3 years.
- Pump every 3 to 5 years (depending on size and use).

Care for your drain field

- Plant only grass or ground cover with shallow roots.
- Don't drive or park on a drain field.
- Keep roof drains, sump pump drains, and other surface runoff away from drain field.
- Use water efficiently to reduce the amount that goes through your septic system. Avoid overload.

Know the signs of a failed system

- Pooling water or muddy soil around tank
- Foul odor coming from area of tank
- Toilet or sink back-ups when you flush or wash laundry
- Bright green grass over drain field





# Minimize Runoff

Minimize hard surfaces that create runoff

## Use Water Wisely

Using water wisely around the yard helps prevent pollution from storm water runoff.

- Water when cool** (morning or evening) to minimize evaporation.
- Use a broom instead of the hose** to clean driveways and sidewalks.
- Adjust sprinkler to cover only the lawn** and not hard surfaces such as a street or sidewalk.
- Install a rain sensor on an irrigation controller** so the system won't run when it is raining.
- Spread a layer of organic mulch around plants** to retain moisture.
- Use drip irrigation** for shrubs and trees to apply water directly to the roots.



Great job! Keep Going →

# Section Two

## Become a Lake Steward

Lake Stewards understand their own water use, catchment, conservation, water quality, and other important water related areas. They look for ways to practice lake friendly living through advanced gardening and land management practices. These practices include and go beyond those at the Pledge level. They may be larger projects that require more expertise and resources. Lake Stewards engage in these meaningful individual actions and also collective actions that benefit people and nature.







### Capture and Infiltrate

Capture and infiltrate pollutant-carrying runoff before it reaches the lake

#### Implement Permanent Landscaping Improvements

There are several landscaping techniques that provide long-term sustainable impacts on water quality.





##### Plant a Rain Garden.

-  A well-placed rain garden collects rainwater, filters pollutants and reduces runoff and flooding.
-  Rain gardens enhance your yard and communities and provide habitat and food for wildlife.
-  Rain gardens should be located in an area where runoff from a downspout or other source can be directed. On average, rain gardens are around 100 to 300 sq. feet (27.9 square m) and 4 to 8 inches (10.2 to 20.3 cm) deep.
-  Learn more at:  
[www.dec.ny.gov/public/44330.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/44330.html).








## **Plant Native**

-  Native plants are adapted to local climate and need less watering and less chemicals to thrive.
-  Native plants attract helpful wildlife including birds, butterflies, and ladybugs.
-  Native plants' deep roots absorb and filter water more effectively than grass and other shorter root plants.
-  To find more information on NYS native plants, visit: [www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands\\_forests\\_pdf/factnatives.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/factnatives.pdf).

## **Limit Lawn Size**

-  Lawns absorb less rainfall than natural areas.
-  Grading to create a lawn removes natural topography where water can collect and have time to absorb.
-  Without the branches and leaves of trees and shrubs, rain hits the ground hard and runs off faster.
-  Consider reducing lawn size and replacing with trees, shrubs, native plants, and rain garden landscaping techniques.

## **Install a Rain Barrel**

-  Capture and recycle the rain washing off the roof.
-  Rain water is “soft water” and ideal for gardens, flower pots, and car and window washing.
-  Personalize the look and utility of the barrel to match your property aesthetics and water needs especially during periods of drought.





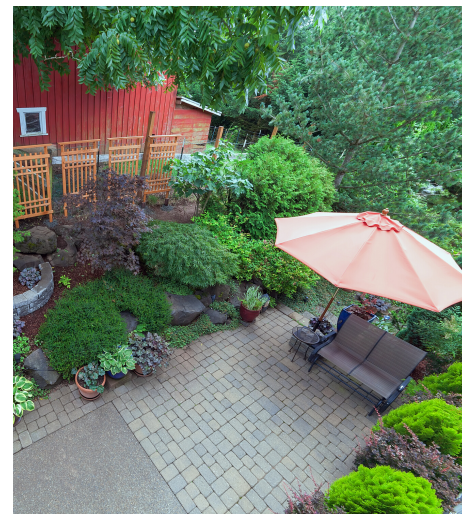
### Advanced Practices

Landscape management techniques for large-scale property changes

Lake Friendly Stewards understand the effects of storm water. The practice of using water wisely as explained on page 6 is an important first step. There are also landscape management techniques that may require new installations or changes to your property and ongoing efforts. Lake Stewards look for and invest in these types of practices.

#### Reduce Impermeable Surfaces

- Keep paved driveways as small as possible** and use permeable/porous pavement and pavers.
- Use stone pavers or stepping stones instead of sidewalks.**
- With new home construction or additions, minimize roofline by building up instead of out.**



#### Minimize Erosion with New Construction




- Preserve existing vegetation where possible.**
- Avoid parking or driving heavy equipment near trees.**
- Build a gravel access road** to minimize site compaction. Locate soil piles away from the road or water and protect with silt fences or cover with a tarp.
- Divert runoff around disturbed areas to minimize erosion.**
- Keep erosion control activities in place** until the site is stabilized and replant the area as soon as possible.

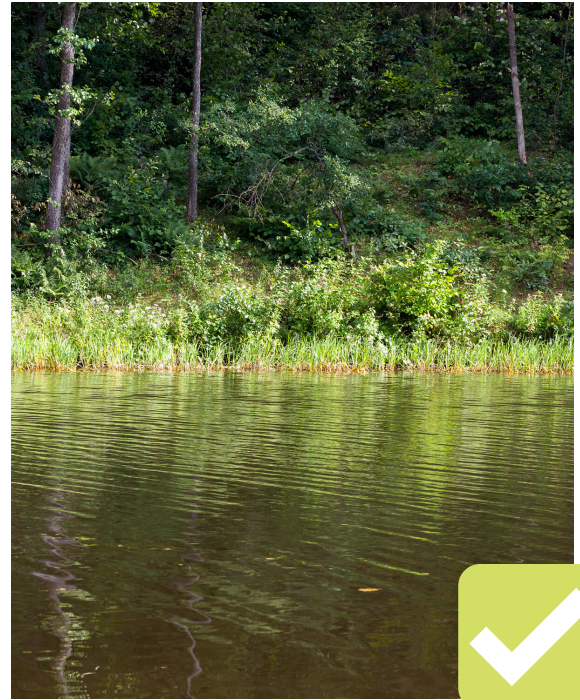


Photo Credit: Schuyler County SWD



## Lakeshore properties have additional and different practices to help protect the lake.

**Minimize erosion of lakeshore area and increase runoff infiltration by maintaining or installing a natural vegetative buffer.**

-  Natural vegetation along the shoreline ideally should cover 50 to 75% of lake frontage.
-  By restoring the shoreline with native plants, you restore the ecological functions of the lakeshore with many other benefits, including food and shelter for local wildlife, absorption of nutrients, deterrence of nuisance species, privacy from lake users, and saved time and money in maintenance.
-  Prevent nuisance animals, such as Canada geese. They prefer short, tender grass and avoid tall vegetation where predators can hide.



**Understand and respond with best treatment of aquatic plant growth.**

-  Benthic mats, suction dredging, harvesting, and raking are useful when implemented properly or appropriately. If not used properly, results may lead to destroyed fish habitat and increased plant growth or spreading of some invasive species.
-  Factors and impacts should be closely assessed prior to implementation.



# Section Three

## Prevent Invasive Species

Boaters of motorized and non-motorized watercraft have an important and significant role to play in Seneca Lake's water quality.

**Clean, drain, and dry your boat and equipment to prevent transference of aquatic invasive species.**



### Clean

Clean off visible mud, plants, fish or animals before leaving water access. Many State parks provide marked bins for disposal of invasive species.

### Drain

Drain motor, bilge, livewell and other water containing devices before leaving water access.

### Dry

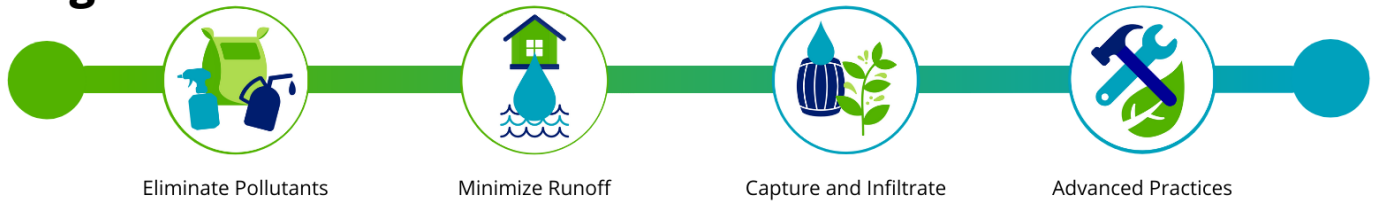
Dry everything that comes into contact with water (boat, trailer, equipment, clothing, dogs, etc.).



**Never release plants, fish, or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water!**

## Pledge

## Lake Steward



This guide is one resource to help you learn and apply Lake Friendly practices. Visit our Lake Friendly Living website for links to more information about specific topics and projects.

[www.senecalake.org/lakefriendlyliving](http://www.senecalake.org/lakefriendlyliving)

### Other things you can do:

- **Show your support for Lake Friendly Living.** Put up a Lake Friendly Living sign in your yard, or on your door or car. Talk with neighbors and residents about what you are doing and the simple things they can do to help protect and preserve Seneca Lake.
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- **Become a Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association member.**

Thank you!

for your commitment and efforts to preserve,  
protect, and promote Seneca Lake water quality.







**Help us Preserve, Protect, and  
Promote Seneca Lake water quality.**

**BECOME A MEMBER  
BECOME A VOLUNTEER**



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