



**Press Release**  
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## Great Lakes Forever Tips for Homeowners

In Chicago, like all the Great Lakes cities, states, and provinces, water is our way of life. From the Lake Michigan water we drink to the beaches, marinas and nearby natural areas where our families go to swim, fish, boat, hike and relax – water is our most precious natural resource. But the Great Lakes are more than just water.

The region that surround the Great Lakes are home to more than 37 million people and an amazing biodiversity - native trees and plants, birds, fish and other wildlife make up the web of life that sustains all of us. Protecting Great Lakes natural areas means protecting critical homes for wildlife and places where our families have enjoyed for generations. When we take actions to protect the Great Lakes, we all benefit from the fresh air, clean and abundant waters and beauty that these natural wonders provide.

With more than 6 million Great Lakes residents in the Chicagoland area, we can make a big difference. We all have a responsibility to protect and conserve the Great Lakes, not for a single interest, but for our families, wildlife and the future. Consider making one or more of these simple steps a part of your Chicago Great Lakes lifestyle:

- 1) Don't buy bottled water.** When heading out on the Lakes, into the woods or just around town don't buy bottled water. By filling your own reusable water bottle, or using a tap-filter at home, you'll save money and discourage the destruction of Great Lakes groundwater resources that result from corporations pumping millions of gallons of public water everyday for their profit. Americans drink more than two billion gallons of bottled water each year – spending more than 900 times more than we do on tap water!
- 2) Get your lawn off drugs.** Avoid using costly and dangerous chemical fertilizers and pesticides in your yard and garden. These often-overused chemicals are carried by run-off rain and sprinkler water to local storm drains, which may pour into local lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands. These household pollutants encourage algae growth, contaminate our fish and may cause health problems for our families and pets.
- 3) Direct home downspouts toward the lawn or a rain barrel, not the pavement.** Not only is rainwater free, it's not chlorinated and therefore a great choice for plants. Rain barrels have become more popular in recent years, come in a variety of sizes with lids to prevent mosquitoes and are easy to use. Check out: [www.cityofbremerton.com/content/sw\\_makeyourownrainbarrel.html](http://www.cityofbremerton.com/content/sw_makeyourownrainbarrel.html).

**4) Professional car washes protect our waters.** Washing a car or truck in your driveway or on the street can end up contaminating local lakes, streams, wetlands and the Great Lakes with soaps and chemical cleaners. Many car wash businesses are connected to city waste water treatment systems that remove pollutants to help keep our waters clean.

**5) Conserve energy in the home.** Believe it or not, protecting the Great Lakes can be profitable. Installing ENERGY STAR® energy-efficient appliances, replacing ordinary light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs and adjusting your thermostat just a few degrees could save hundreds of dollars and reduce power plant emissions that contribute to water pollution and fish contamination in the Great Lakes region.

**6) Buy organic and locally-grown produce.** Buying locally-grown produce supports local economies while reducing the transportation-related pollution and costs carried by products from the west coast, Florida and other distant farmlands. Organically-grown foods are a great choice because they taste great and don't rely on dangerous chemicals that may contribute to health problems and pollution in the Great Lakes region.

**7) Recycle and Precycle.** If you're already helping to reduce waste in the Great Lakes by recycling cans, bottles, and papers every week, we salute you! If you're committed to saving money and reducing your ecological footprint, then consider precycling. Precycling is the act of making sound choices about packaging waste before you buy. You can precycle, conserve energy and help reduce waste by using your own bags at the grocery store, replacing household paper napkin and towel use with cloth and cutting down disposable products from items such as razors and plastic utensils. (Learn more about your ecological footprint at: [www.myfootprint.org](http://www.myfootprint.org))

**8) Load up before you run.** When you run partial loads of dishes in the dishwasher or clothes in the washing machine, you're paying for it in unnecessary costs and energy-related pollution. Wait until you have full load of dishes or laundry to run the machine. An even better way is to line dry clothes and air dry dishes (they'll dry right in the machine if you leave the door ajar for a few hours.)

**9) Landscape with native plants and trees.** The Great Lakes region is home to an endless supply of beautiful native plants, flowers and trees. Save money and trouble when you choose native plants for your lawn and garden. Native plants are accustomed to local soil types, weather patterns, pests and diseases. Not only are they beautiful to look at, they support natural wildlife and they take less work to maintain. Talk to your local state university horticulture extension agent or nursery for recommendations.

**10) Get involved in your community.** Nothing helps the environment more than a group of concerned citizens getting together to help the environment. You can help the Great Lakes by sharing your concern for the Lakes with your friends, neighbors and co-workers. Take fifteen minutes to write a letter to the editor or your favorite politician to let them know you want to keep the Great Lakes great! Share your concerns about the Great Lakes at: [www.greatlakesforever.org/html/trouble/concern.html](http://www.greatlakesforever.org/html/trouble/concern.html).

For more simple tips, information on the Great Lakes and more, visit [www.greatlakesforever.org](http://www.greatlakesforever.org).

Great Lakes Forever is a public education initiative launching in Chicago this June by the Biodiversity Project, Shedd Aquarium and their partners. It's designed to raise awareness of the ecological value of the Great Lakes and concern about the threats to the ecosystem's health.

*Biodiversity Project advocates for biodiversity by designing and implementing innovative communication strategies that build and motivate a broad constituency to protect biodiversity. A national organization based in Madison, Wisconsin, the Biodiversity Project has worked with leaders in policy, advocacy, education, science, religious and grantmaking fields since 1995. For more information, visit [www.biodiversityproject.org](http://www.biodiversityproject.org) and [www.greatlakesforever.org](http://www.greatlakesforever.org).*