

## Clean Water and Healthy Land in a Changing Climate

As global temperatures continue to rise as a result of Climate Change, and extreme weather events become more frequent, there are increased risks to personal safety and the health of our watersheds. However, there are preventative measures we can all take to help mitigate some of the negative impacts and ensure that our watersheds remain healthy and resilient to effects of climate change.

The Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) offers stewardship programs, including the Clean Water Healthy Land Financial Assistance Program to landowners who want to implement projects on their property that benefit the watershed. Many environmental projects are eligible for funding assistance, including tree planting. Tree planting projects increase natural cover and buffer sensitive natural features like streams and wetlands. Trees and shrubs help to stabilize soils which can minimize erosion, provide important shade cover to protect water from getting too warm, and enhance wildlife habitat. Every spring the GRCA enlists volunteer tree planters to help increase natural cover and build resiliency into their local watersheds.

Even in urban areas it is important to protect and enhance the natural environment. Mature trees provide shade to buildings reducing our reliance on air conditioning. Parks with clean trails and water create opportunities for healthy active recreation and increase habitat for wildlife.

On our own properties there are many ways to minimize our impact by creating a more natural landscape. Native plants are drought tolerant and locally adapted to thrive in your yard. They also provide habitat for insects and birds. If you need to water your yard or garden, take from a rain barrel instead of a hose to reduce water consumption. Municipalities use a lot of electricity to purify water and pump it to our neighborhoods.

Water runs off urban surfaces very quickly and picks up contaminants such as lawn fertilizer and road salts before entering local streams and Lake Ontario, which is our source of drinking water. Fortunately, we can slow down and treat that runoff to lessen the impact on natural flowing waters. Consider implementing one of the following to green your grounds and in turn, help protect your watershed and the natural features and functions it provides.

- ~ Direct your downspout away from hard surfaces and into a rain barrel or onto your lawn
- ~ Plant drought tolerant native plants to avoid unnecessary watering
- ~ Create a rain garden
- ~ Use eco-friendly lawn care practices
- ~ Use eco-friendly ice melter for winter safety
- ~ Dispose of waste responsibly; only rainwater goes into storm drains.
- ~ Try installing a green roof, they have many benefits!

The GRCA is offering free environmental landscaping workshops in your area to promote the environmental benefit and pleasing aesthetics of native plants and water conservation.

If you are interested in GRCA stewardship programs, creating a more natural landscape on your property or just have questions about your watershed, call the GRCA office at 905-885-8173 or visit [www.grca.on.ca](http://www.grca.on.ca).

What steps are we taking? Read the [GRCA Climate Change Strategy](#).

