

8 Rs for Fall Yard Care

Reduce

- **Clear leaves and debris that are on or near catch basins.** This helps prevent flooding and reduced the amount of pollution entering streams, rivers, and lakes.



- **Reduce your lawn area.** Plan to ‘right-size’ your lawn as time and money permits. Start small by expanding an existing bed or creating a new one. Build a rain garden to help with water runoff problems.
- **Create fertilizer-free zones:** Reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides especially near wetlands, wetland buffers, and paved areas where chemicals can easily wash in to storm drains and pollute rivers and streams.
- **Reduce flooding:**
 - Make sure gutters are clear of leaves, sticks and debris. Make sure downspouts are connected properly and draining away from the house.
 - Test drains, sump pumps, back-up systems and backflow preventers to ensure they are working properly.
 - Remove or protect valuable items in basements.
 - Purchase flood insurance (even if you don't live in a flood plain).
 - Protect wetlands, trees, and natural areas that help absorb precipitation. Consider rain gardens, native plant gardens, rain barrels, and other landscaping measures to capture and channel stormwater.

Note: If a sewer backup occurs in a basement, homeowners should immediately discontinue household water use and call the DPW Water & Sewer Emergency Line at 349-0010. For additional flood prevention tips, [click here](#).

Reuse:

- **Mulch Your Leaves or Let them Lie:** Try [mowing leaves and grass clippings into your lawn](#)—they provide valuable nutrients and help the soil retain moisture. Researchers at MSU suggest that you can mow several inches of leaves in to your lawn. Others, like The Audubon Society, suggest other reasons to let leaves lie where they fall [here](#). You can also take extra leaves to the Meridian Recycling Center, Hammond Farms, a [community garden](#), or a neighbor who wants them.

“It is recommended for birds that fall leaves are best left on the ground – especially under trees where bugs will be hibernate and leave a winter food source for birds.”

-Kati Adams, Meridian Parks

Recycle

- Backyard composting of leaves and other organic waste creates natural soil additives for use on lawns and gardens.
- Build 5-minute compost bin or purchase a premade bin at your local hardware store.
- Learn more about composting at <https://bit.ly/compostal>



Replant

- **Select plants native to Michigan.** Native plants are uniquely suited for conditions in our region and when planted in the right spot, require minimal care once established. Many natives are essential host plants for butterflies and other insects, which in turn provide food for birds and their offspring. Start by replacing part of your yard with a native garden. Use a wide variety of plants to help control pests and minimize the need for pest control. Read more [here](#).
- **Fall is a good time to plant trees** in Michigan. Trees can provide many benefits, such as soaking up water, providing shelter for birds and mammals, serving as host plants for insects. The oak tree supports 536 species of insects. Trees provide windbreaks, reduce temperature fluctuations, and

absorb carbon dioxide. A medium-sized tree can capture 2,380 gallons of rainwater/year. Select and place trees based upon their mature size and site conditions. More on tree selection, care, and other tips [here](#).



From "The Importance of Planting Natives"
2021 Meridian Township

Sources for seeds, plants, and advice:

- Wild One- Red Cedar Chapter
<http://www.wildoneslansing.org>
- Designs By Nature, LLC
<https://designsbynaturellc.com>
- Wild Type Nursery
<https://www.wildtypeplants.com>

Remove:

- **Learn About Invasive Species:** Join the Meridian Conservation Corps Invasive Species Swat Team
<https://bit.ly/MeridianConservationCorps>
- **View this Training Video**
<https://youtu.be/qghsNU5M04o>

Restore:

- **Restore and Protect the Buffer Strip:** A wetland buffer or natural vegetation strip is also protected by law. Wetland buffers/vegetation strips help minimize erosion, stabilize streambanks and wetland edges, protect water quality, preserve wildlife habitat, discourage geese, and protect from flooding. The wetland buffer is typically 20-40 feet wide, depending upon the size and location of wetland, and is treated the same as the wetland.

There are some things that you can and can't do in a protected wetland and wetland buffer/vegetation strip. For example:

Do...	Don't...
Preserve natural ground cover to the fullest extent feasible. Trees, shrubs, and native plants have deep roots which help protect your property from flooding.	Do not alter existing soil and organic matter. Please do not add or remove soil, stones, yard debris, etc. Do not add fertilizers or pesticides.
Plant perennial native species, especially on exposed soil and steep slopes. Lawns have shallow roots and do not protect from flooding.	Do not mow or clear cut more than 10% of the length of the buffer strip. A lawn is not considered a natural vegetation strip.
Minimize pruning and removal of trees, shrubs, and ground covers unless providing access or views to water features, removing hazardous or nuisance exotic vegetation, or improving wildlife habitat.	Do not remove stumps. Live root systems must be maintained to provide erosion control. Do not build structures or grade the soil without contacting the Planning Department.

- **Protect wetlands, trees, and natural areas** that help absorb precipitation. Consider rain gardens, native plant gardens, rain barrels, and other landscaping measures to capture and channel stormwater. Take this free class: www.washtenaw.org/675/Master-Rain-Gardener-Class

Remember

- **Call MISS DIG 811** before excavating or digging on your property. Miss Dig will locate utility lines free of charge. Visit elocate.missdig.org and rte.missdig.org or call 811.

Rethink:

- **Convert to Electric-Powered Yard Equipment:** Electric lawn mowers, chainsaws, and other equipment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Learn more from resident and Energy Team member Roger Eberhardt: <https://youtu.be/PjYK3s5yx4c> Consider converting other household appliances, vehicles and equipment as well. Take the Citizen's Climate Commitment: meridian.mi.us/energy
- **Additional tips:**
 - For Residents: mywatersheds.org/residents
 - For Businesses: mywatersheds.org/businesses
 - For Educators: mywatersheds.org/businesses
- **Visit the Meridian Green Map** to explore green and sustainable sites in our community
bit.ly/meridiangreenmap