

# Protecting the Huron River

## Winter

### it begins in your yard...



**This year, use less salt when clearing snow at home. It pollutes our rivers, lakes and streams. Frequent shoveling is best!**

The most commonly used salt is sodium chloride, which is cheap and effective,

but not always the best choice because chloride can be toxic to the environment.

The real concern is that anything applied to roads, parking lots, and sidewalks has a quick and easy path to our waterways when melting snow runs into the storm drains.

Limit your use of salt at home with these tips:

- Shovel early and often to avoid using salt or deicers altogether.
- Consider a deicer such as magnesium chloride and check labels for proper application tips.
- Buy your deicer early, before the snow falls for more river-friendly choices in the store.
- Use as little deicer as is needed to get the job done.
- Limit your use of sand. Instead of melting ice, sand provides traction. But it also increases the amount of sediment in our lakes, rivers and streams when it washes into storm drains with melting snow.
- Promptly remove slush and any residual salt, sand or deicer from concrete surfaces to minimize polluted runoff.

When choosing the best snow removal techniques for your home, it is up to you to balance needs for safety, potential environmental impacts, costs and convenience. See "Safe Sidewalks, Safe River" in HRWC's *Huron River Report, Winter 2008* at [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org).

### Winterize your rain barrel...

Prevent your rain barrel from buckling or cracking during our Michigan winters by storing it in your garage, shed or basement and reattaching your downspout and downspout elbow.

Make sure to empty the rain barrel of all its excess water. It is best to store the rain barrel in a protected spot to prevent the plastic from cracking due to cold weather contraction. If you are unable to take the rain barrel inside, remove it from under the downspout and turn the barrel upside-down so water cannot get in.

To direct water away from your foundation during winter thaws, you should reattach your downspout and the downspout elbow. Use those pieces of the downspout you removed to install the rain barrel in the spring.

### Plan your rain garden for next spring...

Slow the flow of stormwater that enters our streams and lakes with a beautiful landscaping feature that captures, holds and soaks in runoff from storms.



Rain gardens are specifically designed for areas where rain water habitually pools or to which it is deliberately channeled. Their loose, deep soils and deep-rooted native plants absorb water and filter pollutants.

Two of our favorite resources for garden designs, plant lists and planting tips specifically for Michigan are: **Rain Gardens of West Michigan** at [www.raingardens.org](http://www.raingardens.org); and the **Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner's Rain Garden Program** at [www.ewashtenaw.org](http://www.ewashtenaw.org).

Brought to you in part by the  
Huron River Watershed Council.  
For additional information and  
resources go to [www.hrwc.org](http://www.hrwc.org)

