

Gardening

In Your
**Wellhead
Protection
Area**

Keeping Your
**Drinking
Water
Clean**

Statewide:

University of Illinois Information Technology and Communication Services, 69 Mumford Hall, 1301 W. Gregory, Urbana, IL 61801, (1/800-345-6087) (ask for publications on horticulture, drinking water quality and protecting groundwater.)

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - Groundwater Education, 524 S. 2nd St., Springfield, IL 62701 (217/785-8577) (ask about groundwater educational materials, school programs and speakers bureau.)

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, 1021 N. Grand Ave. E., Springfield, IL 62794-9276 (217/785-4787) (ask about community wellhead protection and public water supplies.)

Illinois Department of Public Health, 525 W. Jefferson, Springfield, IL 62761 (217/782-5830) (ask about private water wells, water testing and wellhead setbacks.)

Illinois Department of Agriculture, Fairgrounds, P.O. Box 19281, Springfield, IL 62794 (217/782-6297) (ask about Illinois FarmAsyst, pesticide regulations and livestock waste management.)

Illinois State Water Survey, 2204 Griffith, Champaign, IL 61820 (217/333-9043) (ask about well logs, water tests, and groundwater research.)

Illinois Waste Management and Research Center, One East Hazelwood Drive, Champaign, IL 61820 (217/333-8940) (ask about groundwater protection materials, household hazardous waste disposal, chemical alternatives and speakers bureau.)

What is a Wellhead Protection Area?

It is the area managed by a community or a well owner to protect drinking water supply wells. A wellhead protection area may range in size from a few acres to several square miles.

Why is wellhead protection needed?

Groundwater is one of our most important resources. It can easily be contaminated by activities on the land above it. If groundwater becomes contaminated, it is very expensive and often impossible to clean up. Sometimes a new source of drinking water must be found resulting in great costs. The goal of wellhead protection is to prevent contamination of your drinking water, using very inexpensive yet scientific methods of land management.

How large is the wellhead protection area and what is regulated?

The minimum setback for any Illinois well providing drinking water is 200 feet, but a setback can be extended for wells which are sources of community water. In these setbacks there are certain regulations about **potential contamination sources** (such as fuel tanks, landfills, chemical storage areas, livestock waste facilities) and **routes** (such as gravel pits and abandoned wells).

Do I live in a community wellhead protection area?

You may live in or near a current or proposed community wellhead protection area. If you have questions, call your local water operator or the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency - Groundwater Section.

How does my garden affect drinking water?

Fertilizers and pesticides can move through the ground into the aquifer that supplies your drinking water. Overwatering and improper use of fertilizers and pesticides can pose a serious threat to the safety of your community's drinking water supply or your own well.

Common sense gardening

- Focuses on pest problems before they get out of hand.
- Encourages the use of alternatives to chemicals.
- Protects the water we all rely on.



*Everyone can help keep our drinking water supply
clean—especially in a wellhead protection area.*

A certain population of what we call pests is natural. Chemicals kill beneficial insects as well as pests.

Basic steps in Common Sense gardening

- ✓ Identify the pests in your lawn and garden.
- ✓ Learn their habits.
- ✓ Decide what level of damage is acceptable to you.
- ✓ Monitor pests carefully.
- ✓ Maintain a healthy lawn and garden.
- ✓ If pest population approaches an "unacceptable" level, use the least toxic control first and chemicals last.

Contacts

Your Community:

Water Supply Operator (ask about the source of your drinking water, its quality and treatment.)

Cooperative Extension Service (ask about horticulture, integrated pest management, soil testing and water quality.)

Soil and Water Conservation District (ask about soil maps and the Illinois FarmAsyst Program to identify potential groundwater problems in your area.)

Public Health Office (ask about testing water from private wells, interpreting test results, installing and maintaining septic systems, and sealing abandoned wells.)

Do

- Fertilize according to what the plants actually require. Time fertilizer applications accordingly.
- Keep soil healthy. Compost provides organic nutrients.
- Choose locally adapted, disease resistant plants.
- Control weeds by hand pulling, hoeing, or mulching.
- Use alternatives to chemical products, or the least toxic option, whenever possible.
- Be cautious. If you use fertilizers or pesticides, read labels carefully and follow directions exactly.
- Buy only the amount of chemical products you can use.
- Properly seal abandoned wells since they are a hazard and they provide a direct path for contaminants to reach your groundwater supply.
- Install anti-siphon devices (available in hardware stores) on outside faucets with hoses.

Don't

- Overwater. Excess water can wash pesticides and fertilizers into the groundwater.
- Overfertilize. Have your soil tested; the results will tell you if you need to apply fertilizer.
- Apply pesticides when it is windy or raining.
- Use or store any chemicals immediately around water wells since they can move down the well casing.
- Store excess quantities, or dispose of chemicals at home. Contact your local household hazardous waste collection center for details.

