

Ten Ways To Save Tampa Bay

- 1. Plant a Florida-friendly yard** that features low-maintenance, drought-tolerant plants adapted to Florida's climate. These landscapes will require less water, fertilizer and pesticides, reducing harmful runoff to the bay while attracting birds, butterflies and other wildlife.
- 2. Reduce or stop using toxic products.** Even common household cleaners contain hazardous chemicals that can pollute the bay and taint our groundwater supplies. Instead, use environmentally friendly substitutes when possible. For example, a natural cleaning solution can be made by mixing a cup of vinegar in a pail of water. An effective natural pesticide spray can be made by mixing 2.5 tablespoons of liquid dish soap and 2 tablespoons of cooking oil in a gallon of water.
- 3. When you can't avoid using hazardous materials, make sure you dispose of them properly.** Don't dump motor oil, paints, or cleaners down storm drains or gutters, where they will eventually find their way to the bay. Instead, recycle used oil and take chemical products to one of the household chemical collection centers located in each of the three counties bordering the bay.
- 4. If you use a septic tank for waste disposal, have the system pumped out every three to five years** to avoid sludge buildups that could cause the system to malfunction and pollute the bay. Do not flush paper, plastics, diapers and cigarette filters as they can clog septic systems. Kitchen scraps also can clog septic tanks, so start a compost pile and your garden (as well as the bay) will thank you.
- 5. When boating in the bay, use marked channels whenever possible** to avoid running aground in shallow seagrass beds that can be easily damaged by boat propellers. When in shallow waters, tilt your boat motor up and pole through the area.
- 6. If you live on the water, avoid pruning mangroves** -- which provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife and filter pollutants from the water. If you have a seawall, consider replacing it when repairs are needed with a more natural shoreline or installing artificial "seawall reefs" to provide habitat for marine life.

- 7. Make a commitment to drive less and walk, carpool or bicycle more.** Automobiles contribute to air pollution that is a source of nearly one-third of the bay's nitrogen burden. This nitrogen causes algae blooms that cloud the water and deplete it of oxygen.
- 8. Properly dispose of or recycle unwanted monofilament fishing line** that can entangle and kill birds and other wildlife. Remove snagged line you come upon while fishing.
- 9. Conserve water.** Take shorter showers, use the dishwasher less often, and obey lawn-watering restrictions. Remember that our drinking water comes from underground supplies connected to the bay or area rivers that have been dammed. The more we use, the more we reduce the freshwater flows that are the lifeblood of the bay.
- 10. Be a giver, not a taker. Use less of everything** -- water, energy, chemicals -- and use it more wisely. Give back to the bay by participating in a shoreline cleanup or habitat restoration project.

Care and Share! Let others know how much you value Tampa Bay and share your knowledge about keeping it healthy with friends and neighbors. In this way, each of us can help build a community partnership for preserving our beautiful bay.