



Urban Waterways

Key to clean water

As a home or business owner near one of Eugene's many creeks, you have a unique opportunity to help maintain or improve the health of streams and riparian areas in your neighborhood.



From the hills of South Eugene to the West Eugene Wetlands, stormwater from homes and businesses flows to Amazon Creek and the Long Tom River. The Long Tom connects to the Willamette River near Monroe, where it is the source of the town's drinking water. Keeping these waterways healthy is important to our community and our many neighbors downstream.



What is a riparian area?

A riparian area is the area of land next to a stream, lake or other water body. Most healthy, natural riparian areas have a combination of fertile soils and many different types of moisture-loving plants.

Healthy riparian areas:

- ◆ Reduce the likelihood and severity of flooding and erosion
- ◆ Provide food and shelter for fish and wildlife
- ◆ Provide recreation and natural beauty for the neighborhood
- ◆ Filter pollutants from stormwater that flows in from developed areas



What does a healthy riparian area look like?

Healthy riparian areas typically include a variety of types, heights, and ages of plants, including trees, shrubs, grasses, and groundcovers. Plants adapted to the local rainfall, climate, insects, and soil conditions tend to be more successful and are easier to care for because they need less water, fertilizers and pesticides.



Nootka rose

A few common native riparian plants include:



Oregon grape

- ◆ Nootka rose
- ◆ Douglas spirea
- ◆ Elderberry
- ◆ Snowberry
- ◆ Willows
- ◆ Pacific ninebark
- ◆ Oregon grape
- ◆ Black cottonwood
- ◆ Oregon ash
- ◆ Red osier dogwood
- ◆ Red and White Alders
- ◆ Sword fern
- ◆ Choke cherry



Snowberry

Many swales in Eugene use wetland and riparian plants to slow, cool and clean urban stormwater before it is piped to Amazon Creek.



How can you help?

Take care of plants and the streamside

- ◆ Promote a diversity of healthy riparian vegetation.
- ◆ Remove invasive plants such as English ivy, blackberry and scotch broom
- ◆ Plant the “right plants” in the “right places.” Learn about native plants and use them where they are well-suited.
- ◆ Restore eroded streambanks with help from a professional.
- ◆ Leave wood and other natural materials in streams.
- ◆ Learn and follow local, state, and federal regulations before undertaking significant work in riparian area.

Prevent pollution from entering waterways directly or in stormwater

- ◆ Minimize the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Consider using natural, slow-release fertilizers and compost.
- ◆ Locate compost piles on flat surfaces away from streams or drainage areas and keep them covered during the wet winter months.
- ◆ Keep grass clippings and other yard debris out of streams.
- ◆ Never pour soapy water, automobile oil, paint, household chemicals, or pesticides down storm drains. Only rain down the drain!
- ◆ Keep pet waste away from streams, riparian areas, and paved areas. Put pet waste in a bag and place it in the trash.

Trees, shrubs, grasses, and groundcovers along a waterway may appear overgrown, but the rich diversity of plants creates a great place for wildlife, protects the waterway from erosion, and filters some common pollutants.



Additional Resources

Native plant nurseries:
Emerald Chapter of Native Plant Society
emerald.npsoregon.org

Guide to building rain gardens:
<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/oregon-rain-garden-guide-available>

Volunteer at a Eugene park:
eugene-or.gov/parksteward

Report a problem at a park:
eugene-or.gov/parkwatch



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