



## UI Extension Forestry Information Series

### Grow Trees for Clean Water

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Water. It's everywhere. In oceans, rivers and lakes. In the atmosphere. In the food we eat. And in our bodies. The earth is two-thirds water, but 97% is salty ocean or sea water, and another 2% is frozen in polar icecaps and glaciers. That leaves 1% of the earth's total water resources available to us in the form of fresh water from underground aquifers, streams, lakes, rivers, and the atmosphere.

Water flows endlessly through the hydrological cycle changing from liquid, to solid, to gas. As polluted waters enter the cycle the quality of all water is affected.

How can you help? There are many things you can do to improve water quality in your area. It may be as simple as planting a tree!

Some of the best areas to improve water quality are bogs, marshes, and riparian zones. Riparian zones include river and lake borders and serve as a buffer zone of vegetation between the water and the surrounding environment. This buffer zone helps reduce soil erosion, stabilizes the banks of lakes, rivers, streams and irrigation ditches, and filters out pesticides

and fertilizers from agricultural run-off. Bog and marsh vegetation can be adapted to filtering out toxic substances and soaking up excess water.

An easy way to begin improving water quality is to plant trees, shrubs and grasses on wetland or riparian sites that need additional vegetation. Local natural resource agencies, the libraries and nursery catalogs can help you decide what and how to plant.

Water is a resource that many of us take for granted until it is no longer safe to use or no longer there. Let's improve water quality now before it's too late.

For more information on suitable species for planting in your area contact your local office of the Natural Resource Conservation Service or the Cooperative Extension System. Ask about the ACP, CRP, HIP, and other cost share programs available to promote conservation planting.

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