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1. Shift your diet towards fruits, grains, and vegetables

Phosphorus (P) losses compound with each step in the food chain, so try shifting your diet towards plants and grains. Avoid sodas too, as they contain phosphates. Shift to the left here: Grains/fruits/vegetables > milk > tree nuts > mutton/goat > eggs > poultry > pig > bovines

2. Reduce food waste

Food waste is P waste. In the US alone, 35% of all food goes unsold or uneaten. Rightsizing your portions and grocery shopping thoughtfully can reduce this waste.

3. Compost yard and food waste

Yard and food waste both contain P that can be recovered and reused via composting. Many municipal programs offer compost or green waste services. You can also vermicompost or compost at home, which you can add to your plants around the house!

4. Practice good nutrient management on your property

Avoid applying P to your lawn. When necessary, use slow-release products from recycled sources. Leave your lawn clippings on the grass after mowing so nutrients are reincorporated. Consider getting rid of your lawn entirely and plant native plants instead.

5. Keep leaf litter away from stormwater drains

Dead leaves contain P and release it as they decompose. Leaf litter can contribute most of the total dissolved P to local watersheds in the winter. Keep leaves and grass clippings off the street and compost them to create new soil for the spring.

6. Maintain your septic system

Poorly maintained septic systems can deliver waste that contains very high levels of P and other harmful constituents to nearby waterways. Regular inspections and pumping are important, as is keeping drains free of items that might clog them.

7. Dispose of pet waste properly

Your pet's poop contains P! Pick up your pet's solid waste and ensure it is properly disposed of or composted before it washes away.

8. Avoid using herbicides and pesticides

Herbicides and pesticides, such as glyphosate and iron phosphate, can contain phosphorus. It's best not to use them at all, but if used, they are best used sparingly. They can wash off your property in stormwater and be conveyed to nearby waters.

9. Waste less paper, wood, and other forestry products

Timber harvesting operations can increase soil erosion from logging and deliver P to nearby waters. Paper, pulp, and forestry products also contain P. By reducing, reusing, and recycling/composting paper, you help reduce these impacts.

10. Use phosphate-free detergents

Bans on phosphates in laundry and dishwasher detergents have been in place in the US and Canada for some time, but other P-containing detergents and products (e.g. shampoos and soaps) are still available. Look for the Safer Choice logo to select P-free products.

11. Dispose of household hazardous wastes properly

Drop off household hazardous wastes at your local hazardous waste center. Dumping them down your drain contaminates the waste stream, making nutrient recycling from wastewater more problematic.

12. Advocate for phosphorus-friendly laws, ordinances, and rules

By using your vote, you can influence decision-makers to support this cause. Whether it's through your HOA to push for better landscaping practices, your municipality to support composting and upgrades to waste/stormwater facilities, or by supporting clean water regulations at the state and federal level, you can make an impact! More information can be found at <https://phosphorusalliance.org/>.