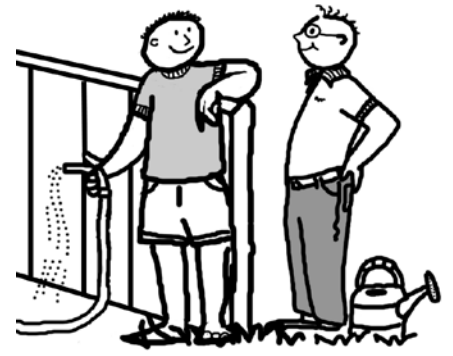


# inspiring your neighbours



**There are two ways to inspire your friends and neighbours: through your actions and through your words.**

## **Actions speak louder than words**

Taking a simple action can be more gratifying and less contentious than trying to verbally persuade your friends or neighbours. They may not want or need more information, just a nudge. Offer help that encourages your friend or neighbour to take that first step, even if it's only asking why you're digging that hole. (Information and resources on these actions are in the kit.)

- ◆ Pick up and drop off a public health unit water test bottle for them the next time you test your own water.
- ◆ Organize a clean-up day for a park or beach in your area. (Hand out an action sheet on water protection from an environmental group. People will be in a cooperative mood. Tap into the boost in community spirit.)
- ◆ Arrange a bulk purchase of septic pumping for your neighbourhood or a bulk purchase of shoreline bushes.
- ◆ Arrange a bulk rental rate for lawn aeration in the spring for your neighbourhood.
- ◆ Offer to show your neighbour what changes you've made around your house.
- ◆ Contact a local environmental organization to help you organize a talk or a workshop on a common concern.
- ◆ Invite your neighbour to the next community tree planting, waterfront bush planting, or water-related workshop.

## **Opening the discussion**

We learn a great deal by listening to the people closest to us. Talking is an important first step towards creating positive change in your neighbourhood. Change may not happen after one conversation, but over time people will begin to understand the basics of water protection. They may have seen something on TV or in the newspaper and things will begin to click. You don't need to be a broken record. Just drop a line now and then and respond to their concerns. This will open the door to further discussions over the many years of your relationship.

### **Some tips for openers:**

- ◆ begin by speaking with your closest neighbours, or those most interested in the subject
- ◆ mention that they recycle, plant trees, or engage in other eco-friendly actions to help them perceive themselves as environmentally concerned
- ◆ talk about water in general and ask broad questions
- ◆ listen carefully and refrain from commenting
- ◆ identify your neighbour's concerns and validate (sympathize with) them
- ◆ understand the motivations of your friend or neighbour: (e.g. health, money, appearance, etc.)
- ◆ provide examples of solutions that address your neighbour's concerns and motivations

You are naturalizing your lawn and waterfront, conserving water and generally cleaning up your act. You are providing an example to the people around you. They may or may not have noticed. This factsheet will help you encourage others to take action.

**If you want to meet your neighbours, just start digging a hole in your front lawn.**

*They will all come over to find out what you're doing. They may even offer to help.*

**Use straightforward reasoning.**

*Avoid debates. They can become quite roundabout: who's putting what into the water and where? Likely, you don't have those answers. Explain your concerns using common sense and what you do know.*

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**Once a concern or motivation has been identified, use information that appeals to it. Here are some approaches to try.**

Motivation:	Approach:
Money	Using rain water and conserving tap water uses less electricity for pumping and saves money. Basic septic maintenance is cheap insurance against spending \$5,000-\$20,000 to replace a system. The cost of bottled water and/or purifying equipment is prohibitive. Let's try to keep the water clean.
Health	Any number of potentially hazardous contaminants leaking into a poorly sealed or poorly positioned well may cause illness in those who drink from this and nearby wells. A healthy septic system won't contaminate a well. Pesticides have been linked to child, adult and pet cancers.
Health	It takes less time (and money) to maintain naturalized lawns and shorelines once they're established.
Appearance	The concept of what makes a beautiful lawn or yard is changing. Bill Gates, the wealthiest man in the world, has a naturalized lawn and waterfront.

**Focus on common interests and concerns.**

*Discover which interests and concerns you share with your friends and neighbours. Perhaps you are both concerned about your wells drying up, or about contamination from a common neighbour's septic system, or about the lack of spawning areas on your part of the lake. Focus your conversations on these common interests.*

**Addressing Specific Needs**

Your friend or neighbour may have valid reasons for not taking a given action that you feel is very important. Try to determine the real reason and address it. They may need:

**Information**

- Be a reliable source of information.
- Offer to look up telephone numbers of service providers.
- Give them a factsheet or website address on their issue.
- Invite them to join you at public information meetings.
- Research technological solutions to a difficult problem.
- Find a qualified person or organization that can explain the process.

**Money**

Research the real costs and find out if there are programs that offer financial assistance.

**Time**

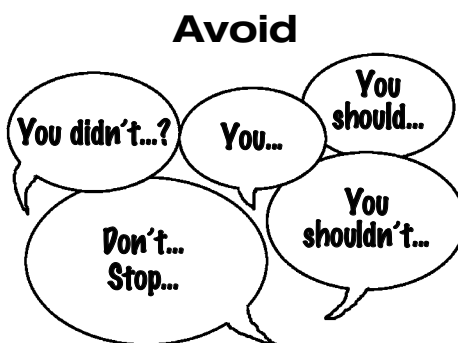
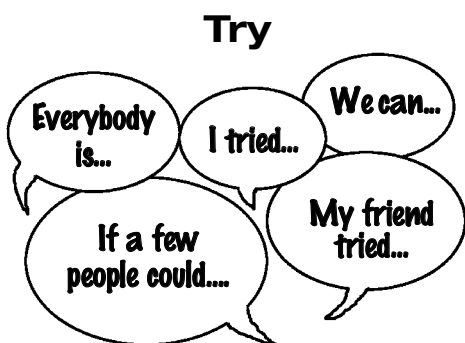
Recommend a service provider to do the work for them. (Lawn maintenance, landscaping, etc.)  
Offer to organize a work bee to assist with a given project.

**Separate the person from the problem.**

*Open the conversation by congratulating your friend or neighbour on a good action he or she has taken. All water concerns are common issues because we share the same water. Some people may become angry and defensive if you suggest that what they do on their own property affects others' properties and our rivers, lakes and groundwater.*

**No one likes to be told what to do.**

*Often, his or her practices were the right thing to do at some point in the past. If you get angry at a person or a group, you may alienate them and create more resistance.*



Prepared with assistance from Jay Kassirer of Cullbridge Marketing and Communications, [www.cullbridge.com](http://www.cullbridge.com), and Doug McKenzie-Mohr. Based on *How to Talk to Others*, originally developed by the Toronto Environmental Alliance, [www.torontoenvironment.org](http://www.torontoenvironment.org).