



TAP Top Tips for World Water Day

TAP Top Tips

- Groundwater in our area is at risk in the town from vehicle pollution and from chemicals used in gardens and other open spaces. On the downs, chemicals used on crops such as nitrate fertilisers can find their way to groundwater.
- High levels of nitrates have been recorded in Brighton & Hove's water supply, and we are working with farmers and gardeners to reverse the trend by using more considerate practices.
- As with many things in life, prevention is better than cure! Here are ten top tips to help gardeners and householders reduce groundwater pollution.

1. Create a raingarden

Rain gardens are designed to mimic natural processes which break down pollution and reduce flood risk by slowing water down and using time, sunlight, vegetation and soil microbes.

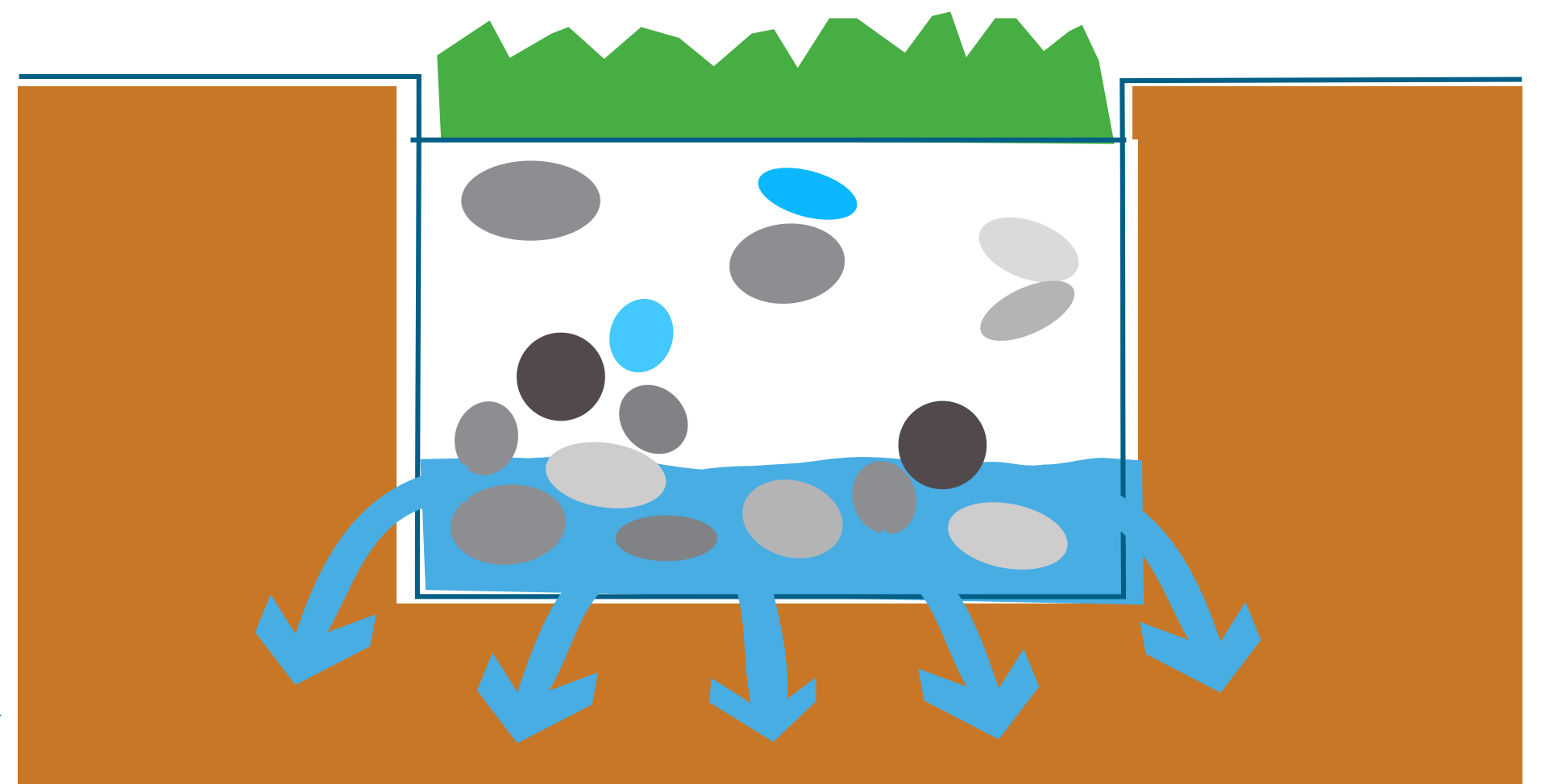
They can be as simple as a planted area with gravel and sand layers below to channel, filter and cleanse water before it filters into the ground.

They can be beautiful spaces, attracting wildlife and bringing splashes of colour, and can be incorporated into gardens or allotments to help improve groundwater quality

For more information:

[The UK Rain Garden Guide](#)

RHS - [Raingardens](#)



Picture credit: Roberta Rogers



2. Drain your Driveway

Did you know that if you are paving an area that's more than 5m² homeowners have a legal duty to avoid water draining onto public highways from their property? [LINK](#)

Keep as much greenery as possible, and choose permeable paving, properly installed.

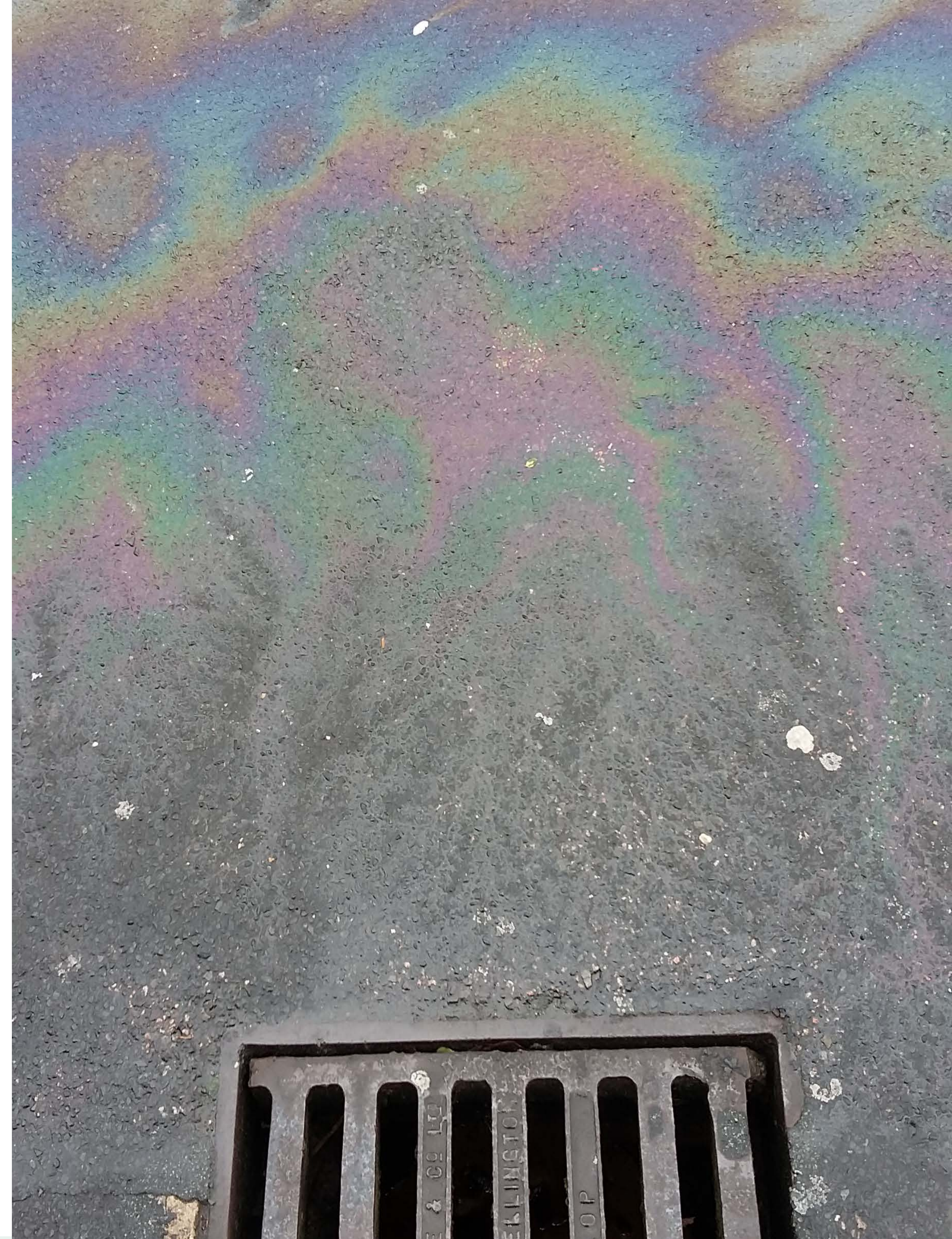
Take a look at the [RHS's guide to permeable driveways](#)

Picture credit: RHS

3. Only rain down the drain

Most road drains are designed to carry only rain water. Pouring pollutants down these drains is like pouring them straight into the river or into the groundwater.

- One litre of oil can pollute one million litres of drinking water.
- The oil from one car engine can pollute an area the size of two football pitches.
- Oils do not mix with water and can spread out across water in a layer one molecule thick.
- Oil can be recycled at your local civic amenity site.
- Cooking oils and fats can be used to produce biodiesel or used for biofuel
- Cooking oils and fats may be disposed of at dedicated collection points or could be collected by local schemes for recycling [See [The Green Centre's Waste A-Z](#)]





4. Value your Verges

Grass verges benefit nature and people by creating a green network around the city, providing a natural way for rainwater to soak into the ground. They can easily become compacted, making it impossible for water to soak into the ground, increasing flood risk and losing valuable green space for pollinators.

What can you do:

- Find out about your council's [grass verge plans](#)
- Get together with neighbours to [Adopt a Verge](#)
- Don't park on verges or pavements
- If you're having work done, don't leave skips or materials on the verges, and ask contractors not to park on the verges



5. Healthy plants – help your herbaceous perennials

You can stop chemicals filtering into the groundwater by:

- Avoiding chemical fertilisers and pesticides
- Spreading and digging in well-rotted manure in spring (rather than spreading in the autumn and leaving it un-dug over the winter).
- Buying genuinely bee-friendly plants – check with your garden centre if plants and seeds have been pre-treated with chemicals.



Picture Credit: [Seedy Sunday](https://www.seedsunday.org/)

6. Save water – choose climate resilient plants

With a changing climate the UK is will see wetter winters and drier summers, so building in natural resilience to these extremes will help promote a healthy garden without increasing the need of additional water or chemicals.

Save water with water butts and rainwater harvesting, and a [green roof](#) on your shed looks great, slows water down and helps nature.

Consider:

- Selecting Mediterranean species
- Providing shade and windbreaks
- Using surface barriers, like sheeting or carpets to warm the soil and reduce weeds before planting
- Increasing plant diversity
- Saving and sharing seeds and plants with friends and neighbours



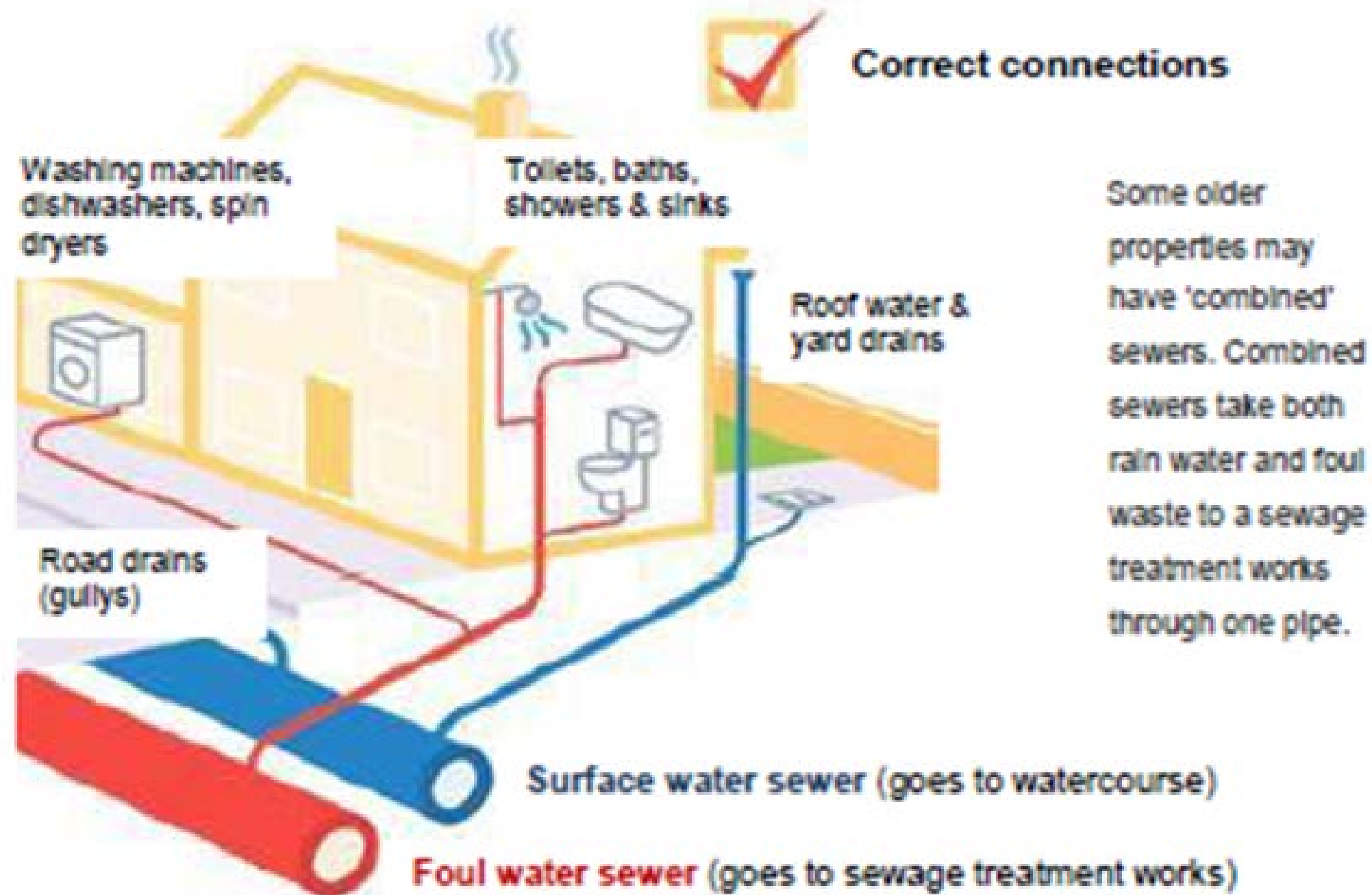
7. Healthy soils

Healthy soils retain water and nutrients more effectively. Promote soil health with these simple measures:

- Mulch - keep the soil covered
- Minimise disturbance - no-till / no dig
- Rotate crops - diversity above for diversity below
- Plant cover crops / green manure on soil instead of leaving it bare over winter - keep a living root in the soil.

One of the best green manures for growing on chalky soils is Phacelia, which is colourful, fast-growing, great for the bees and makes an excellent companion plant for brassicas and tomatoes.

8. Misconnections



Misconnected properties allow dirty water from toilets, washing machines, dishwashers, showers, baths and sinks to enter surface water drains (which drain to rivers and groundwater) instead of going through the sewer system to be treated.

Follow this checklist to find out if you have misconnected drains. The more 'yes' answers, the more likely you will be to have a misconnection.

- Was your house or property built after the 1920s?
- Have there been changes to the original drainage?
- Have there been any extensions or alterations, new bathrooms, toilets or kitchen installed?
- Are any pipes connected to rainwater downpipes?
- Do you have an outside toilet or appliances in garages, sheds or outbuildings?

For more information visit [Connectright](https://www.connectright.org.uk/)

9. Keep it clear

Our sewers are only designed to carry the three Ps – pee, poo and paper.

Blockages can be caused by a build-up of fat, oil and grease, wet-wipes, sanitary products, nappies and other 'unflushables'. These blockages can lead to sewer flooding but are entirely preventable.

Top tips to prevent your sewer from flooding

- Use containers – butter tubs, yoghurt pots or jam jars can all be used to collect cooled fat and oil – then just put them in the bin
- Clear your plates – scrape leftover food residues from plates, pans and utensils into the bin before washing up
- Bag it and bin it – use nappy sacks or dog poo bags (degradable if you can) to throw away any nappies, sanitary items or condoms
- Strain the drain – a simple sink or drain strainer can stop food and hair getting down the pipes.



10. Managing your septic tank or cesspit

Some properties rely on septic tanks or cesspits to collect and treat their waste. If this leaks, groundwater could be polluted.

Southern Water offers subsidies up to 50% of the cost for repairs to, and upgrading or replacement of, septic tanks and small sewage treatment plants (up to £5,000).

These grants are assessed on a case by case basis according to priority areas for safeguarding our drinking water supply.



Keep in touch

The Aquifer Partnership

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