

# Healthy Acres Newsletter



MISSOULA COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY & EXTENSION



## Preventing mosquitos before they hatch: The Power of Larvicide

As mosquito season approaches in the Lolo Mosquito District, now is the perfect time to take proactive steps to protect our families, pets and community. One of the most effective ways to reduce mosquito populations is to stop them at the source, before they take flight.

That's when larvicide comes in.

### What is Larvicide?

Larvicide is a mosquito control product applied to standing water, where mosquitoes lay their eggs. It works by killing mosquito larvae before they become biting adults. This early intervention helps break the mosquito life cycle and significantly reduces the number of biting mosquitoes in our area.

### Why it matters for Lolo?

Our local environment with its ditches, ponds, and seasonal flood waters create ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes. By targeting larvae early, we can reduce the overall mosquito population and lower the risk of mosquito borne illnesses like West Nile Virus.

### Safe, Effective, and Environmentally Friendly

The larvicides used in our district are designed to be safe for people, pets, birds, and fish when applied correctly. Many are derived from naturally occurring bacteria that specifically target mosquito larvae, leaving beneficial insects and wildlife unharmed.

### How Residents Can Help:

- **Eliminate standing water:** Empty any containers holding water, clean gutters, keep birdbaths refreshed every few days.
- **Use larvicide where needed:** For water that can't be drained, like rain barrels or small ponds, larvicide tablets or "mosquito dunks" are a smart effective option.
- **Work together:** Community wide participation makes a big difference. Encouraging neighbors to do the same helps protect everyone.

By taking simple steps now, we can enjoy a comfortable, safer summer with fewer mosquitos.

If you have questions or would like guidance on using larvicide, contact Layne Von Lanken 406-370-6768 or visit our website [www.missoulaeduplace.org](http://www.missoulaeduplace.org) search Lolo Mosquito for resources and support. Let's work together to keep Lolo Mosquito wise and worry free this season!

### In this issue:

Livestock  
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Preparedness

ReWild Your Yard

Stretching your  
Grocery Dollar

Watercraft  
Inspection Station



## Lolo Mosquito District: What to expect this season

Although it's still early to make definitive predictions—and much depends on abiotic factors such as rainfall, snowmelt rate, and temperature trends—it is reasonable to anticipate an increase in mosquito activity this season. This expectation is based on higher-than-average snowpack levels and increased runoff compared to the spring of 2024. It is likely that certain areas which remained dry last season due to limited runoff are now re-wetting. These areas may contain dormant mosquito eggs that did not hatch in 2024.

Since mosquito eggs can remain viable for multiple seasons when dry, the current re-wetting could lead to a surge in larval development in stagnant water during the spring months.

Our district's targeted larvicide program is designed to address this challenge. By focusing on early intervention, we aim to eliminate a substantial portion of the mosquito population before adult mosquitoes begin to emerge and bite, typically in early June.





# Hort Report

by: Sarah Holden, Missoula County Extension Horticulturist

Join us for our second monthly Plant Powered Social Hour at Vine Plants and Design! Owner Ryan Tripepi will guide us through the fascinating topic of plant propagation. We'll cover various subjects, including:

- Water vs. soil propagation
- The best plants for propagation
- Troubleshooting common propagation challenges

Participants will have the chance to start their own plant cuttings and swap with others to enhance their collections!

Location: 343 SW Higgins Ave, Missoula, MT 59801

Please remember not to bring your own plants or cuttings from home!



PEST ALERT HOTLINE

406-258-3820



Did you know we offer support for all your home, lawn and garden pests! Bring a nice sample in to the PLANT CLINIC and we will help you come up with a management approach! OPEN Mon-Friday 8:30-4:30pm



## Take the Time, Minimize the Chaos! Equine and Livestock Emergency Preparedness Education for Western Montana

Natalie Sullivan, MS PAS  
Agriculture, Equine, and Livestock Extension Agent

Owning animals, especially horses and livestock, in Western Montana means being prepared for everything in every season: wildfires, floods, power outages, earthquakes, highway closures, disease outbreaks, and extreme temperatures! In 2024 alone, Western Montana experienced a catastrophic windstorm resulting in weeklong power outages, multiple wildfires with large evacuation zones, and record-breaking temperatures. The Missoula County Department of Ecology and Extension, in partnership with the Missoula County Office of Emergency Management, is developing resources to help you be more prepared for the next, inevitable crisis. When animals are involved, the required planning is more complex.

Equine and livestock emergency preparedness is essential because it saves lives, reduces harm, and ensures faster recovery when disasters strike. Being prepared minimizes chaos, allowing individuals and emergency responders to act quickly and use resources more efficiently. It also strengthens community resilience, helping everyone bounce back stronger and safer.

In the month of June, all equine and livestock surrounding communities are invited to three unique educational opportunities- one hands-on, one online, and one that even provides a free lunch!



June 12<sup>th</sup> The Big Sky Horse Park, 5 - 8 p.m.

- Preparing Your Horses and Livestock for the Next Emergency
- Topics: Vaccination Recommendations, Missoula Rural Fire Department Extinguisher Demonstration, Emergency and First Aid Kits, Temporary ID options for Horses and Livestock, and an Emergency Trailer Loading Clinic!

June 16<sup>th</sup> Zoom Webinar, 7 - 8:30 PM

- Planning for the Worst, Hoping for the Best! Resources for animal emergency planning in Western Montana" with MSU Extension and Missoula County Department of Emergency Management

June 28<sup>th</sup> Exploration Center, 12 - 2 PM  
Balsamroot Room

\*Lunch Provided

- A Biosecurity Update for Horses and Livestock in Western Montana" with Montana Department of Livestock Veterinarian

Register online at [www.missoulaeduplace.org](http://www.missoulaeduplace.org)



## Stretching your Grocery Dollars in Missoula: Local Resources & Community Support

As grocery prices continue to rise, Missoula offers a wealth of local resources to help residents access fresh, nutritious food while supporting the community. Here's how you can make the most of what's available this spring:

### Shop Fresh & Local at Missoula's Farmers Markets

Missoula hosts several vibrant farmers markets where you can find fresh produce, meats, dairy, baked goods, and more:

#### Missoula Farmers Market

- Located at the XXXXs on North Higgins Avenue, this market operates Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (mid-May to mid-October) and Tuesdays from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (July to early September).

#### Clark Fork River Market

- Situated under the Higgins Street Bridge, east of Caras Park, it runs Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (mid-May to mid-October).

The Market season opens this year on Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup>. These markets not only offer fresh, local products but also accept SNAP benefits. The Missoula Farmers Market participates in a program called Double SNAP Dollars where SNAP benefits are doubled for produce purchases, effectively giving you \$2 worth of produce for every \$1 spent. Reach out to our Expanded Family Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Educators to learn more about our partnership with Farm Connect, formerly known as Missoula's Community Food and Agricultural Coalition (CFAC), and how you can earn Double SNAP Dollar coupons.

### Join a CSA for Seasonal Savings

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs allow you to subscribe to regular boxes of fresh, seasonal produce directly from local farms. This not only supports local agriculture but often provides cost savings compared to retail prices. Farms like Garden City Harvest's PEAS Farm, Turner Farms, Long Step Farm, Western Montana Grower's Coop, Harlequin Organic Produce, and many more offer CSA programs that connect you directly with the source of your food. This in turn provides you with nutrient dense, fresh produce grown and harvested right here in Missoula's valley.

### Access Free Groceries at Missoula Food Bank

The Missoula Food Bank & Community Center offers a welcoming, no-eligibility-required store where you can shop for groceries based on your household size. They provide a variety of food items, including fresh produce, dairy, frozen meat, bakery items, and canned goods. For those with limited time, pre-packed shopping carts are also available.





## Stretching your Grocery Dollars in Missoula

### Utilize WIC & SNAP Benefits

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are federal assistance programs that help low-income families purchase nutritious foods. In Missoula, these benefits can be used at participating grocery stores and farmers markets, with programs like the double SNAP dollar benefits at the Missoula Farmers Market enhancing their value. The WIC office can be accessed through Missoula's Health Department. If you're interested in learning more about SNAP benefits and how to sign up, you can reach out the Missoula Office of Public Assistance (OPA).

### Ride the Free Market Trolley

To make accessing these markets easier, Mountain Line operates a free Saturday Market Trolley that runs every twenty minutes from 8:55 a.m. to 11:45 a.m., connecting various market locations downtown.

### Free Nutrition Education Classes

Beginning on April 24<sup>th</sup> join EFNEP Educator Molly Attwater, MPH, for a FREE online cooking class series. This series is asynchronous to fit within your busy schedule. Looking how to stretch your food dollars a little further? Learn how to properly meal plan and prep for your family on a tight budget. Attend just 6 of the 9 weekly classes and receive your very own Instant Pot Duo, our favorite all-purpose cooking appliance! Register for class and learn more [here](#).

### Stay Connected

For more information on these resources and to stay updated on local food initiatives, visit:

- [Missoula Food Bank & Community Center](#)
- [Missoula Farmers Market](#)
- [Clark Fork River Market](#)
- [Destination Missoula – Farmers Markets](#)
- [WIC Office](#)
- [Office of Public Assistance – SNAP, TANF, WIC](#)
- Our [FREE Online Cooking Class](#)

By taking advantage of these local programs and markets, you can enjoy fresh, healthy food while supporting Missoula's community and economy.



## Upcoming Garden Programs

### April 26<sup>th</sup> PHLOX FEST

- 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

### May 1st Why Water Part One:

- Understanding Basic Irrigation and Sprinkler Systems
- 6:00 p.m.

### May 6<sup>th</sup> Garden Tool-Torial

- Tool Selection for More Joy & Less Work
- 5:30 p.m.

### May 8<sup>th</sup> Why Water Part Two:

- Components & Implementation
- 6:00 p.m.

### May 15<sup>th</sup> Plant/Pollinator Relationships

- 6:00 p.m.

### May 24<sup>th</sup> Botanical Illustration

- 10:00 a.m.

### June 17<sup>th</sup> How & Why to Use iNaturalist

- 6:00 p.m.

### June 12<sup>th</sup> Sprinklers 101

- 6:00 p.m.

### June 24<sup>th</sup> Common Weeds

- 6:00 p.m.





## Now Hiring for the Youth in Restoration Program

The **Youth in Restoration Program**, offered through the Missoula County Department of Ecology, provides high school students ages 14 to 18 with a unique opportunity to explore careers in natural resource and conservation work. This summer employment program is designed for teens who enjoy working outdoors and want to make a tangible impact on in their local public lands. Participants earn **\$15.50 per hour** while gaining valuable experience that sets the stage for future careers in conservation.

Over 9 weeks of the summer, students work side-by-side with a variety of natural resource professionals—from botanists, wildlife biologists, to land managers—on real-world projects that benefit local ecosystems. Activities range from biocontrol collections and vegetation monitoring to building and repairing fences that protect sensitive habitats. Each task not only teaches practical field skills but also deepens participants' understanding of the challenges and solutions to managing these resources.

One of the highlights of the program is the chance to embark on backpacking trips into some of Montana's most iconic wilderness areas, including the **Great Burn** and the **Bob Marshall Wilderness**. These multi-day excursions allow students to fully immerse themselves in wild landscapes while contributing to long-term conservation goals. Whether they're tracking invasive species or restoring damaged trails, participants leave the program with a stronger connection to the land and a clearer sense of how they can play a role in its stewardship.

If you know someone who would be interested in this opportunity, have them check out the YIR page on our website with more details and the application. All applicants get an interview!

**More Information Here!**



## Join Us for Missoula Gives May 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>

We're excited to be participating in Missoula Gives, a 26-hour online giving event that highlights the incredible work of nonprofits across our community.

Healthy Acres Healthy Communities Foundation is the nonprofit arm of the Missoula County Department of Ecology and Extension, and your support truly makes a difference. Your gifts make it possible for us to provide hands-on educational programs, helping grow resilient communities, healthy ecosystems, and lifelong learning. Your donation supports local programs in land stewardship, youth development, agriculture, and nutrition education all rooted in science and dedicated to serving Missoula County.

🌱 Give where you live. Invest in a healthier, more sustainable future right here at home.

[Give to Healthy Acres Healthy Communities](#)

### MISSOULA BIOCONTROL CREW

COLLECTS AND COST-SHARES  
BIOCONTROL AGENTS FOR:  
Spotted knapweed  
Leafy spurge  
Dalmatian toadflax



### ABOUT BIOCONTROL

- Appropriate tool for contiguous weed infestations 1 acre or more
- Not appropriate if you plan to spray herbicides at the exact same location
- Great long-term weed management option
- Allows native and beneficial plants to better compete

**Phone**

406.540.3808

**Email**

**\$50/RELEASE  
+ SHIPPING**

[missoulabiocontrol@gmail.com](mailto:missoulabiocontrol@gmail.com)



## ReWild Your Yard: Creating Habitat, One Backyard at a Time

It's spring in Missoula and if you're anything like me, you're excited to get out into your yard or garden to clear out old vegetation, get your site ready for planting new garden plants, and dream of a flower-filled summer garden. While you're planning for the season ahead, consider that your yard or garden space can be a place to provide for and protect native pollinators and other insects! In an era when pollinator populations are declining and native ecosystems are under increasing pressure, small acts of stewardship – including in your own yard! - can add up to big changes.

That's the idea behind **ReWild Your Yard**. This collaborative program through the Missoula County Department of Ecology empowers Missoula County residents to make manageable changes to traditional yards, gardens, and even public spaces to create thriving pollinator habitats. Starting this spring, we are offering workshops, classes, and events to help you learn how rewilding benefits both you and our important native pollinators.

### The Lawn Problem

Traditional lawns are tidy, but they're also ecological deserts. Turfgrass species offer little to no value for pollinators or other native insects, and the heavy resource use required to maintain them, such as irrigation, fertilizer, and herbicides, compounds the negative impact on the environment. With pollinators like native bees, butterflies and moths facing alarming declines, it's time to rethink how we manage the landscape right outside our backdoors.

### ReWilding can be a Solution

ReWilding doesn't mean letting your yard go "wild" in the chaotic sense! It means restoring, at least to some extent, ecological function. Our yards and gardens are meant to be places that we enjoy and that support our wellbeing, too. You can create that beautiful backyard you've been imaging AND create habitat by including native plants in your landscaping, reducing lawn areas, and eliminating pesticide use. Even a small planter of native plants on a doorstep or balcony can provide vital forage for native pollinators.

### Accessible, Everyday Conservation

At the heart of our ReWild Your Yard program is the idea that anyone can support pollinators and conserve biodiversity, not just large landowners or professional ecologists. While you look forward to those glorious Missoula summer days, think ahead to what you can do to support pollinators in your own space.

Want to learn how you can ReWild your space? Please save the date for our second ReWild Your Yard workshop tentatively scheduled for September 6th. You'll learn why native plants are important for supporting pollinators, different ways to prepare your site for planting, and learn basics of landscaping using locally appropriate native plants. We hope to see you there!





## There's a Story in Every Bite!

Ask anyone about the best thing they've ever tasted. Watch how quickly their facial expressions show complete delight in that memory! This could also be said of "the worst thing ever tasted" memory as well. Food can trigger emotions and memories that take us to another place and time. A friend once told me, "The Gramma I was terrified of, made the best fried chicken I had ever eaten! I was so terrified of her, that I had to close my eyes tightly just so that I could eat that perfectly seasoned, amazing chicken leg." He happily discovered later in life, that she was not terrifying at all.

We know that food is necessary to survival, but we would probably choose to survive on the foods we love—the food that connects us to those life-sustaining memories. The seeds that become the plants that grow the tomatoes, chilis, and peppers to make the salsa, must first be purchased, put into good soil, consistently fed, watered, and weeded. Through the collaborative efforts of the **Rocky Mountain Gardens and Honeyberry Kitchen**, opportunities abound for hands-on learning with research-based information and fresh local produce. The goal to inspire confidence in the kitchen, is met every time a participant washes up, puts on an apron, and begins to find joy in the task of cutting up vegetables for a soup.

**Young Chefs in the Kitchen, Cultivate to Cook, and Guest Chefs in the Kitchen** classes invite participants to learn new techniques through demonstration, hands on preparation, and sampling tasty ingredients from innovative recipes. Over **400** participants have come through the Honeyberry Kitchen doors since our grand opening. Sign up early as many classes sell out quickly!

Being part of the Western Montana Fairgrounds campus provides us with more opportunities to provide innovative programs leading up to fair week such as "Blue Ribbon Canning" techniques. Your continued support and enthusiasm will allow those of us at Missoula County Ecology and Extension to continue doing what we love to do for you, so that you will have a new story to tell with every bite taken in the Honeyberry Kitchen!

Kelly Moore, Family & Consumer Science Agent

## Invasive Species Alert: Whitetop, *Lepidium draba*

As spring unfolds across Missoula County, residents may start noticing clusters of small white flowers emerging along roadsides, pastures, and disturbed ground. While they may look harmless at first glance, these blooms could be a sign of Whitetop (*Lepidium draba*)—an aggressive, fast-spreading invasive plant that threatens native landscapes and agricultural productivity.

### What is Whitetop?

Also known as hoary cress, Whitetop is a deep-rooted perennial in the mustard family, originally from Eurasia. It has spread widely across the western United States, thriving in disturbed soils and quickly crowding out native vegetation.

### How to Identify

- Flowers: Small, white, and densely clustered in flat-topped bunches.
- Leaves: Gray-green, arrow- or heart-shaped, and clasping the stem.
- Height: Typically 1 to 2 feet tall.
- Roots: Extensive and deep, capable of regenerating from even small fragments.

Whitetop usually begins blooming in late April through early summer, making spring the ideal time for early detection and control efforts.

### Why It Matters

Whitetop is more than a visual nuisance—it's a serious ecological and economic threat. Once established, it:

- Displaces native plant species and reduces biodiversity.
- Degrades wildlife habitat.
- Competes with valuable forage in pastures and rangelands.
- Is difficult to eradicate due to its persistent root system.

[Whitetop Fact Sheet with recommendations](#)





# Rocky Mountain Garden Berry Trails

Exciting news for berry lovers! The Rocky Mountain Garden is embarking on a new berry trial, testing a variety of hardy and unique berries to determine their growth potential in our challenging climate. This project will provide valuable insights into the best berry varieties for our region, offering new options for gardeners and growers alike. Below is a look at the promising varieties we are planting this season.

## Currants & Jostaberries

**Jostaberry** – A hybrid of gooseberry and black currant, this thornless shrub produces dark, mild black currant-flavored fruit with a firm texture. It's vigorous, productive, and disease-resistant. (Zone 3-8)

**Titania Black Currant** – Large, antioxidant-rich berries with high vitamin A & C content. A quick-bearing, disease-resistant variety. (Zone 3-9)

**Minnesota 52 Red Currant** – A mid-season variety with large, high-quality fruit and good disease resistance. (Zone 3-8)

**White Imperial Currant** – Produces medium, translucent white fruit that is sweet and high in vitamin C. (Zone 3-8)

**Golden Currant** – Features fragrant yellow flowers in spring and sweet orange to burgundy berries. A vigorous, widely adapted native shrub. (Zone 2-8)

**Red Lake Currant** – A striking shrub that produces antioxidant-rich red berries in large clusters. (Zone 3-8)

## Gooseberries

**Hinnonmaki Red Gooseberry** – A Finnish variety known for large dessert-quality berries with smooth skin and rich sweetness. (Zone 2-9)

Pictured to the right

## Blackberry

**Mission Blackberry** – These resilient blackberries have survived in Montana's Mission Valley for over 30 years, enduring temperatures below -30°F. With proper care, they may even withstand -40°F. They produce large, sweet-tart berries on thorny canes. (Zone 3)

**Baby Cakes Thornless Blackberry** – A dwarf, thornless variety ideal for patio pots. It produces large, sweet berries in a fireworks-like spray and can fruit twice in one season. (Zone 4)

## Elderberries

**Bob Gordon Elderberry** – A high-yielding variety from Missouri with sweet berries that are less prone to bird predation. (Zone 3-8)

**Adams Elderberry** – Produces large, sweet berries ideal for jams, juices, and fresh eating. (Zone 3-8)

## Serviceberries & Cherries

**Smokey Serviceberry** – A widely grown Canadian variety with large, sweet, flavorful berries. (Zone 2)

**Carmine Jewel Bush Cherry** – A super-hardy, naturally dwarf cherry from Saskatchewan, producing vivid red cherries with a balanced sweet-tart flavor. (Zone 2)



## Meader Kiwi

Hardy kiwi that produces large crops of delicious, smooth-skinned fruit, capable of yielding over 100 lbs. per plant. (Hardy to -25°F)

## Blueberries

**Jostaberry** – A hybrid of gooseberry and black currant, this thornless shrub produces dark, mild black currant-flavored fruit with a firm texture. It's vigorous, productive, and disease-resistant. (Zone 3-8)

**Titania Black Currant** – Large, antioxidant-rich berries with high vitamin A & C content. A quick-bearing, disease-resistant variety. (Zone 3-9)

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This trial will help us determine which varieties thrive in our unique climate and offer the best fruit production. Stay tuned for updates as we monitor their growth and performance.



# A Warm Welcome Back to Clearwater Junction Watercraft Inspection Station

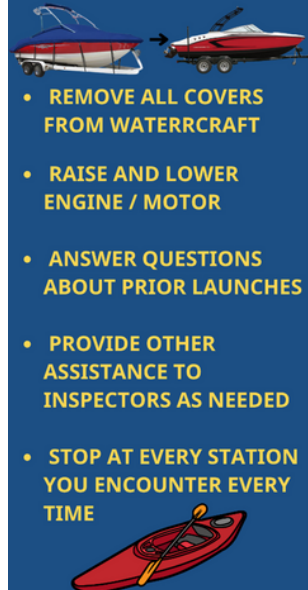
## Prior to Arriving



- **CLEAN** all watercraft of visible debris
- **DRAIN** watercraft of all water
- **DRY** watercraft, storage areas, bilge, anchors, ballast tanks, and live wells

**CLEAN. DRAIN. DRY.**

## AT THE STATION BE PREPARED TO...



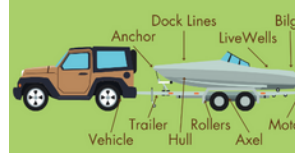
- **REMOVE ALL COVERS FROM WATERCRAFT**
- **RAISE AND LOWER ENGINE / MOTOR**
- **ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT PRIOR LAUNCHES**
- **PROVIDE OTHER ASSISTANCE TO INSPECTORS AS NEEDED**
- **STOP AT EVERY STATION YOU ENCOUNTER EVERY TIME**

## AIS HIDING SPOTS

### Kayaks, Paddle Boards, Rafts, and Inflatables



### Motorized Watercraft



### Gear



Our watercraft inspection stations and inspectors are back and ready to help protect our waters from **Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)** in 2025! Since its opening on April 12th Clearwater Station has already checked over **500** boats. This is our little reminder of how to prepare for a check station and what to expect when you get there. It is important that every watercraft stops, from jetboat to deflated inflatable paddle boards/kayaks, at every station, every time. Invasives are tricky and can hide in places you might not expect, reference our AIS Hiding Spots sheet (left) to see some of the spots to **Clean, Drain, Dry** before leaving a waterbody.



## Aquatic Invasive Species Highlight

Why do we stop at inspection stations? To protect our waters from invasive species like **Quagga and Zebra Mussels!** These invasive mussels are great at reproducing and cause lots of damage when they get established in non-native waters. They have many impacts including clogging boat motors, irrigation line, and hydro-electric infrastructure. They also feed on the nutrients of the lake making it harder for native species to survive. If you think you see something say something! Take a picture and report it to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks at [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov) or call (406) 444-2440.

## Who To Look For...

### Zebra Mussels

Stripes can range from brown to yellowish white in color



Usually marked with a zigzag pattern

Adults Approximately 2.5cm in Length

### Quagga Mussels

Widely ranging color with bands of black cream or white



Usually have dark concentric rings on the shell

Adults Approximately 4cm in Length

### Impacts:

- **Clog boat motors, irrigation intakes, and valves**
- **Reduce available food for native fish and other animals**



**CLEAN. DRAIN. DRY.**