

# Holistic approach to working with nature



Water is a **valuable resource** and despite what it feels like sometimes, we are in one of the driest regions of the UK. With that in mind, it is very important to ensure we keep our river water as clean as possible to meet the ever increasing drinking water needs of the region.

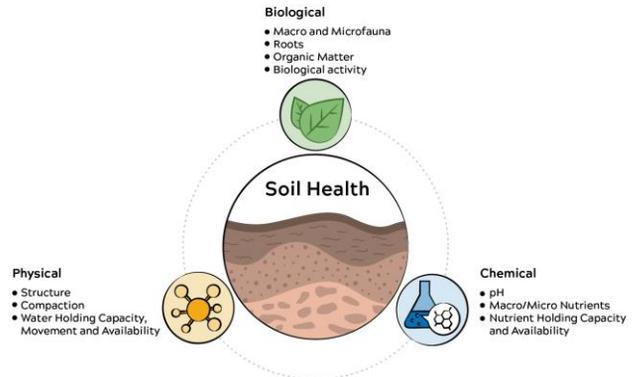
The **amount of chemicals or nutrients** that are needed to cause an issue for water quality and water life is **very small** - the legal limit for any chemical in raw water is 0.1 µg/L. This is a tiny amount – as much as one second in one thousand years.

The best way to keep chemicals out of water is to minimise the use. One way you can do this is by following **Integrated Pest Management practices (IPM)**. The UK's farmers use IPM when growing food for the nation and it involves a hierarchy of best practice choices - these include starting from cultural methods to **reduce** the issue (such as crop **variety**), **suppress** issue(s) (**via rolling land, physical removal, crop rotation**) and so on up the scale, which may end up with using appropriate chemicals (may need less coverage or weaker product so can you **replace** products) if still required.

**Soil health is the foundation of Integrated Pest Management as healthy soils lead to healthy plants that require less artificial inputs.**

Three key areas to soil health;

1. **Chemical** - the **nutrient status** of the soil and **pH** as determined by sending a soil sample off for laboratory tests.
2. **Physical** - assessed via digging a soil pit and comparing how well the **soil breaks apart, rooting density, the colour and smell of the soil**. One way to do this is to dig a soil pit in your allotment or garden and then compare that to a piece of untouched land underneath a hedge or in long term grass.
3. **Biological** - can be assessed by counting the number of **earthworms present in the soil**, the more earthworms you find, the more healthy and biologically active the soil is.



Integrated Pest Management helps frame your decision making about pest, weed and disease control while reducing reliance on chemicals. If a chemical is needed - remember to follow advice on the label as this **maximises efficacy of the product whilst also protecting you and the environment**.

## How you can help:

1. Check if you are in a **surface water catchment** by going to [MAGIC Maps](#) and entering your postcode.
2. Use **Integrated Pest Management principles** to guide your decision making when targeting weed, pest and disease issues in the garden or allotment.
3. Look at your soil from the **three elements of the soil health triangle** - physical, chemical and biological plus measure each of these elements. Record how these change over time. Have the practices you have used increased or decreased these measurements?
4. Look at ways to **increase beneficial species** and natural predators into your garden. These will help to control key pests while bringing diversity and making your garden or allotment ecosystem more resilient.

For more information please contact:  
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Being careful with water is an all-year-round challenge. Not just when there's a dry spell.

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