

YARD WORK

WHAT IS STORMWATER POLLUTION?



When rain flows over streets and other surfaces, it picks up pollutants and carries them into the stormwater conveyance ("storm drain") system. This system is designed to prevent flooding by transporting water away from developed areas. However, this water is not filtered or treated, and all the contaminants it contains eventually flow to our streams.

Once there, polluted runoff can harm wildlife and habitats.



Wastes from yard work are among the many common stormwater pollutants that can degrade water quality. Other examples include paint, oil, and automotive fluids, construction debris, pet wastes, litter, pool chemicals, and dirty wash water.



HOW DOES YARD WORK POLLUTE STORMWATER?



What you do in the yard can directly impact the quality of our local waters. When soil, organic wastes, and chemicals leave your yard, they flow directly into streams and rivers where they can harm human health and the environment.

OVERWATERING

Over watering washes fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides into storm drains.

In your yard these chemicals kill garden invaders, but when washed into local waters they poison fish and contaminate water.



CHEMICALS

The "chemical only" approach to pest control often causes more problems than it

solves. Over 90% of the insects in your lawn and garden are not harmful. Many gardeners use pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers at over 20 times the rate necessary, greatly increasing polluted runoff.

ORGANIC WASTES

Grass clippings, leaves, and tree trimmings swept or blown into streets and gutters carry chemicals into our waterways and can clog catch basins, increasing the risk of flooding. Once they settle into water bodies, these materials begin to decompose, absorbing oxygen.



SEDIMENT

Soil and dirt washed from yards can also harm aquatic life by blocking light transmission, lowering water temperatures, and inhibiting photosynthesis.

WHAT CAN I DO?



Here are some things you can do to keep contaminants out of runoff.

GENERAL LANDSCAPING TIPS

1. Schedule big projects for dry weather.
2. Store stockpiles under plastic tarps to protect them from wind and rain.
3. Store pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals in a covered area.
4. Use plants that require less water.
5. Prevent erosion by planting fast-growing grasses to shield and bind the soil.

LAWN and GARDEN MAINTENANCE

1. Don't overwater. Use drip irrigation, soaker hoses, or micro-spray systems.
2. Use curbside yard waste recycling or take clippings to a landfill for composting.
3. Don't blow or rake leaves into the street or gutter. Avoid hosing down the pavement.
4. Don't overfertilize or apply chemicals near ditches, streams, or water bodies.

CHEMICAL ALTERNATIVES



1. Don't kill insects that aren't harmful.
2. Use less toxic products, for example dehydrating dusts (such as silica gel), insecticidal soaps, boric acid powder, horticultural oils, pyrethrin-based insecticides, bacterial insecticides, and organic or non-toxic fertilizers.
3. Use predatory insects when possible.
4. If you must use a pesticide, use one that is specifically designed to control your pest (listed on the label). Always read the label and use only as directed.

