

Jefferson County Department of Storm Water Management



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Issue 5
Fall/Winter 2013

JeffCo H₂O News

Clogs & Cascades & Critters OH MY!

If there's one true thing about southern cooks, it's that we can fry almost anything. Give us a skillet, some cooking oil, fresh ingredients, and in no time at all, we'll serve up a scrumptious home cooked meal. That's why it's so hard to imagine that used cooking oil and grease from these legendary creations can make such a big impact on the operation of our sewer system and water quality in local waterways. The problem (aside from all those delicious calories we are eating) is how we dispose of used cooking oil and grease.

Pour it down the drain, and it won't take too long before you're in a world of hurt. The cost of a plumber to clear clogged drains or a sewage backup can really add up. And on a larger scale, what happens at your home happens in Jefferson County's sewer system. Blockages can cause sewer system overflows where raw sewage cascades out of a system manhole and makes its way to yards, streets and waterways. These events are costly to repair and unhealthy for people and the environment.

Pour it outside on the ground, and it's nothing but an invitation to a variety of critters and vermin to visit your yard.

So what should you do with your used cooking oil and grease? You could collect it and put it into the trash for pickup. But rather than treating it as waste, why not treat it as a resource and recycle it? When you recycle used cooking oil and grease at one of [Jefferson County's 19 collection stations](#), it is picked up by licensed vendors, processed, and reused in other products such as animal feeds, pet foods, industrial operations, and biodiesel fuel production.

And besides being a smart thing to do, recycling used cooking oil and grease is easy and free! Just pick up a new, clean, gallon jug at one of the collection stations and bring it home. Next time you have used cooking oil or grease, allow it to cool and pour it into the jug. When the jug is filled, drop it off at any collection station, pick up a new, clean jug, and repeat!

1 DROP BUILDS UP!



1. COOK & COOL



2. POUR INTO CONTAINER



3. RETURN & EXCHANGE

OIL & GREASE CLOGS DRAINS

PROPERLY DISPOSE OF YOUR USED COOKING OIL AND GREASE

OIL & GREASE CLOGS SINK DRAINS AND SEWER PIPES AND IS COSTLY TO REPAIR. SAVE MONEY AND PREVENT HEADACHES ~ RECYCLE THESE PRODUCTS FOR FREE.

FOR RECYCLING INFORMATION AND LOCATIONS, CALL 238-3876



What's Happening?

Fall Plant Sale October 19-20 - Here's your chance to stock up on native plants at Birmingham Botanical Gardens' [Fall Plant Sale](#).

Birmingham E-cycle Day October 23 - Don't doom your old gadgets to a landfill! Bring them to Short 20th Street North for [recycling](#).

Prescription Drug Disposal October 26 - Here's a safe way to clean out your medicine cabinet. Bring unwanted meds to [one of these locations](#).

Just in Time for the Holidays - Consider some alternatives for getting rid of unwanted items that are not in good enough shape for donation. There may be a better choice for them than the landfill! Check out the Alabama Environmental Center's (AEC) [Recycle Alabama](#) website for the lowdown on most things recyclable. The site makes it easy to find out what AEC accepts, any material-specific guidelines, and other vendors which accept these materials. AEC is one of the few sites in Alabama that accepts glass containers and textiles (yep, even your old t-shirts, undies and shoes).

Tree Recycling - When the ornaments come off, a live Christmas tree is just some mulch waiting to happen. Find a tree [recycling location](#) near you!

Focus On: Cooking Oil & Grease Recycling

The [Environmental Services Department](#) operates and maintains over 3,000 miles of sanitary sewer lines which serve 480,000 people in Jefferson County. This vital function makes it possible for customers to rise in the morning, get ready for work or school, and not have to think about what happens to their wastewater after showering, brushing teeth, or flushing!

To address the many problems that fats, oils and grease (FOG) from residential sources create in the system, Environmental Services launched the Cooking Oil and Grease Recycling Program in 2009. This program not only reaches out to communities to teach people that keeping FOG out of the system is beneficial to everyone - it also provides the necessary tools for success through conveniently located recycling stations stocked with free containers. The Storm Water Management Department also promotes this recycling program through its Clean Water Awareness poster campaign since keeping FOG out of the system helps protect water quality.

A big THANK YOU to Environmental Services for its work operating and maintaining the sewer system as well as implementing this proactive program!

Get Some 'Re-Leaf' this Fall



Whether mulching them into the lawn with a mower, spreading them on landscaped areas, or adding them to your compost pile, leaves are a sustainable source of mulch and nutrients!

By now, it's probably impossible to ignore all those leaves falling in your yard. If you tried mulching leaves last year, you probably found that you saved yourself some serious time and money by using your mower to mulch leaves into your lawn (free nutrients) and by repurposing excess leaves (free mulch) to provide cover for your landscaped areas. If you've never tried these techniques, maybe this is the time to move on from hours of blowing and bagging, the cost of buying mulch and fertilizer, and the effort involved in loading and bringing all these materials home - to that solution that just fell into your yard! It's best to mulch leaves into your lawn every week or so to make the volume of leaves more manageable for you and utilized more efficiently by your lawn. Try using your lawnmower with the bag attachment on to shred and collect leaves prior to spreading on landscaped areas. Shredding before spreading reduces matting and creates a more uniform appearance. If you simply can't let go of the more manicured look that commercially produced mulch gives your landscape, try spreading a thin layer of purchased mulch over a layer of shredded leaves.

To report suspected water pollution, call 205.325.5792. Questions or comments? Email diclementel@jccal.org or call 205.325.8741.