

# Jefferson County Department of Storm Water Management



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## JeffCo H<sub>2</sub>O News

### When Less is More

There are a few things that having more of can be a good thing. Money and time are probably two of those things. But with pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers, using more than is recommended doesn't provide any benefit, and in some cases can do more harm than good. Soil can absorb only so much of these products, and overuse just wastes your time and money. The package directions will indicate the amount of product to use based upon the size of the area to be treated, and will recommend the application rate to set on the spreader or sprayer dial so that the product will be properly applied. When to use yard chemicals is important, too. Many people think that applying granular products right before or during a rain helps them soak into the soil. Actually, that is the worst time, since anything more than a drizzle washes much of it from your yard before the soil absorbs the nutrients, and creates polluted runoff. Choose a dry day to apply, and then slowly water it in with a hose or sprinkler. So how big is your yard or garden? You know the formula: length X width = area. Don't forget to subtract the size of paved areas from the total!

### What's Happening?

**Recycle Alabama Day April 13.** Just in time for spring cleaning, here's a chance to recycle those unwanted items! Click [HERE](#) for more information.

**Earth Day at the Gardens April 27.** Come on out to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens 11-4 and celebrate the environment here on planet Earth.

**Urban Gardening IPM Workshop April 30.** Learn how Integrated Pest Management can help you safely control your garden pests. Call the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) at 205.879.6964 Ext. 11 to register.

**Birmingham Electronic Recycle Day, Linn Park, May 9.** Don't doom your old gadgets to a landfill! [HERE](#) is a list of accepted electronics.

**Rain Barrel Workshop May 11.** Build and bring home a rain barrel! To register, call ACES at 205.879.6964 Ext. 11.

**Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Workshops.** Grab your lunch and head to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens! Click [HERE](#) for more information.



Photo: Johnson County - Kansas State Extension

The job's not done until overspread yard chemicals are cleaned up from paved areas!

Native plants are adapted to conditions in Alabama and generally require less care.



Photo: John Manion, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

## "SPREAD" THE WORD!



### FERTILIZE CORRECTLY

PREVENT ADDED CLEANUP - DON'T SPREAD FERTILIZER ON PAVED AREAS

ANY EXCESS JUST GETS WASHED OFF BY RAINFALL OR IRRIGATION AND POLLUTES OUR WATERWAYS. ALWAYS FOLLOW LABEL DIRECTIONS.

REPORT SUSPECTED WATER POLLUTION, CALL 325-5792



### What Goes Around Comes Around

We've all heard that phrase at one time or another. And when you consider chemicals used in lawn and garden care, it couldn't be truer. Fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides can be very helpful in achieving your landscape goals if you use only what your yard needs and carefully apply these products. However, feeding your lawn and garden or ridding them of unwanted pests has the potential to create unintended results.

Many pesticides and herbicides cannot distinguish between a 'pest' and a 'pal', and most contain broad spectrum chemicals that kill all plants and insects they contact. That includes insect 'pals' like bees and butterflies which are important in plant pollination. Pesticides and herbicides also can be harmful to pets and humans if they are inhaled, absorbed through the skin, or eaten. Washed from your yard by rain or carried by wind into nearby streams, these chemicals do the same thing in water that they do on land: herbicides and pesticides kill fish, animals, and plants that live in and around the water while fertilizers cause algal blooms that deplete oxygen in waterways, killing aquatic life. Pesticides and herbicides also can enter the food chain when animals and plants absorb and retain these chemicals in their systems. These affected plants and animals could be consumed by other animals and even humans. That's why it's so important to choose the least toxic chemicals for the job and control where, when and how they are applied.

One alternative is to let nature do some of the work by establishing an eco balance in your yard. Insect 'pals' like ladybugs, preying mantis, green lacewings and nematodes (worms) naturally feed on pests such as beetles, aphids, ants and mosquitoes. Native plant 'pals' also can help create this equilibrium in your yard since many act as hosts for insect 'pals' and are resilient enough to thrive in our local conditions. The [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#) is a great resource for finding plants native to our area. Over time, your efforts can become a sustainable solution to keeping your lawn and garden free from the effects of pests and reducing the need for yard chemicals. Learn more about working toward eco balance with [12 Lessons Learned](#) by John Manion, Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

### Focus On: Pesticides, Herbicides, Fertilizers

You could say that it takes a village to reduce stormwater pollution. Or in Jefferson County's case, a team of departments whose combined work helps protect water quality. This issue of *JeffCo H<sub>2</sub>O News* focuses on pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. Local government employees and commercial operators and applicators who handle these chemicals are required to obtain a state certification and adhere to all rules and regulations for their sale, transportation, storage, and application. Jefferson County's General Services and Roads and Transportation departments have trained staff with the required certifications to manage these chemicals and properly treat County grounds and roadways. A big THANK YOU to these departments and their employees who are committed to protecting Jefferson County water quality while doing an important job!

To report suspected water pollution, call 205.325.5792. Questions or comments? Email [diclementel@jccal.org](mailto:diclementel@jccal.org) or call 205.325.8741.