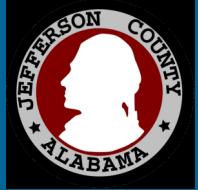


# Jefferson County Department of Storm Water Management



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Commissioner Joe Knight  
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Issue 7  
Spring/Summer 2014

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

### REDUCE RUNOFF!



### WATER THE LAWN, NOT THE STREET.

WATER THAT LEAVES YOUR PROPERTY IS CALLED RUNOFF

RUNOFF CARRIES LAWN PRODUCTS AND LOOSE SOIL TO OUR WATERWAYS CAUSING POLLUTION. DIRECT SPRINKLERS & DOWNSPOUTS ONTO LAWNS, NOT DRIVEWAYS.

REPORT SUSPECTED WATER POLLUTION, CALL 325-5792



### The High Cost of Thirsty Lawns

We've all seen it before. A sprinkler system turns on and vigorously waters the lawn - and the sidewalk - and the street. Failing to properly adjust and time sprinkler systems can create a runoff cocktail of yard chemicals, soil, and pet waste, not to mention the amount of wasted water. It is estimated that thirsty turf consumes as much as 19.5 trillion gallons of water per year in the US. Luckily there are some things that can be done to reduce the impact on natural resources. Simply choosing the [type of turf grass](#) that is best suited for your yard and implementing more efficient [irrigation practices](#) can go a long way toward reducing runoff and conserving water.

Our love for lawns is rooted in history. The first managed residential grassy areas date back to the 1600s. Today, lawns are the largest irrigated crop in the US. According to [Scienceline.org](#), irrigated turf occupies more than 40 million acres of land. But our long devotion to expansive (and expensive) lawns may have to change in the future due to the effects of lingering droughts and declining groundwater reserves. Already the popularity of [alternative landscaping techniques](#) to conserve resources is growing. Creating an alternative landscape involves scaling back the turf in your yard to further reduce water consumption, runoff, and yard chemical use. Here are a few ideas to begin a transition from turf to an alternative landscape:

- ◇ Start with a plan! First identify turf areas that serve a purpose, such as recreation. These areas will remain unchanged.
- ◇ Identify the hardest to maintain turf areas as the first candidates for removal. Areas of turf that are the least functional, or do not serve a specific purpose, are next on the removal list.
- ◇ As time and money allow, replace the turf areas you have identified with easy care groundcover, [water efficient plants](#), or consider planting trees to create natural areas that will expand as the tree canopy grows. Over time, your yard can become a lovely, low impact, sustainable retreat.

**Brown Bag Seminar Series** This FREE [seminar series](#) is co-sponsored by Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Jefferson County Storm Water Management. No reservations are required; light refreshments available.

**Household Hazardous Waste Day - April 26** Get ready to bring your [HHW](#) to McLendon Park, Birmingham (Legion Field) from 8 to 11 am. It's free and open to all Jefferson County residents!

**Do Dah Day - May 17** Come on out for this fun [event](#) which supports local animal charities. Storm Water Management staff plans to be there with a poo toss game (yes, you read that right) to teach proper pet waste disposal.

**Alabama Master Gardeners Helpline** Help for your home gardening challenges is just a phone call away. Dial 1-877-252-GROW and select option 3 to speak to a master gardener volunteer serving our area.

### Focus On: Inspection Services

Article 13 of the Subdivision and Construction Ordinance requires that construction site operators prevent disturbed soil from leaving the site. Storm Water Management Department staff reviews construction site plans, issues Storm Water Permits for approved sites, investigates complaints, and provides workshops for builders. Inspection Services Department staff provides administrative support and inspects permitted sites throughout the construction process to make sure that operators keep soil on the site, and that the site is stabilized when construction is completed. A big THANK YOU to Inspection Services for its work to help protect our waterways from eroded soil!

### Rock, Paper, Garden

Spring is here and summer is just around the corner. But along with warmer days come issues like bare patches, aggressive weeds, soggy spots, and soaring water bills. Before using yard chemicals to control pesky plants, giving up on too wet or bare areas, or dragging out the hose to water the landscape yet again, you might want to consider some stormwater friendly low maintenance options.

Bare, sloped or otherwise hard to maintain areas easily can be transformed into a yard feature by installing a [rock garden](#). If you don't already have appropriate rocks in your yard, you can purchase them at a home and garden store. Properly installed, the rock will help reduce weeds, hold in moisture, and stabilize the soil. When choosing plants for your rock garden, make sure that they are suited for our local conditions, and all have similar water and sun requirements.

You already may have a weed control solution at your home and don't know it. Correctly applied, layers of newspaper are an inexpensive and easy way to prevent weeds. Spread the newspaper about 10 sheets thick over the soil and overlap the layers by several inches to eliminate gaps. Work the newspaper around existing plants, or poke holes in the newspaper to install new plants. Gently spray the newspapers with water until they are soaked, then lightly cover with leaves or other mulch to give a uniform appearance and help hold the sheets in place. The newspaper will prevent weeds from springing up, help keep soil moist and cool, and add nutrients to the soil as it decomposes.

A [rain garden](#) is a great remedy for depressions (in your yard, that is). Placing water loving plants in low lying areas will help soak up the soggy areas and create a beautiful and colorful area. Installing a [rain barrel](#) to collect rainwater from your roof is an easy way to store up rainy day resources and reduce the cost of watering thirsty areas of your yard. Rain barrels can be purchased at home and garden stores, ordered online, or [homemade](#) from food quality plastic drums.



A rock garden can help tame a difficult to maintain area of your landscape.



Newspapers are an inexpensive, chemical free way to control weeds.

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.