

Jefferson County Department of Storm Water Management



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JeffCo H₂O News

Issue 9
Fall/Winter 2014

IT'S "MULCH" BETTER!



FLOOD

IT AFFECTS YOU!
LEAVES IN ROADWAYS BLOCK RAIN
FROM ENTERING STORM DRAINS
CAUSING FLOODING.

FOOD

SAVE MONEY!
MULCHED LEAVES WILL DECOMPOSE
SUPPLYING PLANTS WITH A NATURAL,
SLOW RELEASE FORM OF FREE FOOD.

ONE LETTER CHANGES EVERYTHING. KEEP LEAVES OUT OF ROADWAYS AND STORM DRAINS.

REPORT SUSPECTED WATER POLLUTION, CALL 325-5792



The survey says ...

You may have heard the saying "you don't know for sure until you ask". The Storm Water Management staff periodically conducts surveys to find out what Jefferson County residents know about stormwater, and what types of practices they implement at home. One question asked was what people do with leaves and other yard waste. The good news is that half of the people surveyed reported handling these materials in a stormwater friendly manner by mulching or composting them (26%), or leaving them on the lawn or garden (24%). Bagging leaves for trash pickup is just throwing away a valuable resource. Raking or blowing them into roadside gutters and storm drains can clog the drainage system and cause flooding on the street and in your yard. What do you do with leaves and yard waste at home?

Baked, broiled, grilled or fried

No matter what you cook or how you cook it, there usually is some oil or grease involved in the process. When the holiday meals are over and it's time to wash the plates, pots, pans, and casserole dishes, take a minute to make sure that cooking oil and grease don't wash down the kitchen drain. Any oil or grease can be cooled and poured or scraped into a plastic or metal container with a lid and taken to the nearest Jefferson County cooking oil [recycling station](#). New recycling containers are available to you for free at all recycling stations. Keeping oil and grease out of your home's plumbing and out of the sanitary sewer system goes a long way toward preventing costly repairs and unhealthy sewer overflows.



Properly managing used cooking oil and grease is as easy as: 1 - Let it cool. 2 - Pour it into a plastic or metal container with a lid. 3 - Take it to a recycling station.

Dirt, only better

Some people call it organic fertilizer. Others go so far as to call it black gold. Whatever the name, compost is a free, renewable source of rich, nutrient dense material that can be used in multiple ways in your yard. Compost is the natural result of decomposing organic materials and contains a variety of nutrients that plants need to grow. Organisms such as earthworms, beetles and snails munch away on these organic materials and break them down into smaller bits. Microscopic bacteria and fungi go to work on the leftovers and handle the chemical end of decomposing. Even though it sounds icky, the result is a rich topsoil-like blend of exactly what most plants need to thrive.

Starting a [compost](#) pile at home is not difficult, does not require much space and, depending upon weather conditions, can yield usable compost in as little as a few weeks. All you need to get started is an area in which to contain the materials, a combination of green and brown organic waste, some water and air, occasional stirring of the ingredients, and some patience. Materials you can use to start composting are not hard to find - look no further than your yard and kitchen. Rather than sending yard debris such as grass clippings, leaves, and small branches, and kitchen waste such as vegetable and fruit scraps, egg shells, and coffee grounds to the landfill, compost them instead. With our relatively mild winters here in Alabama, composting can continue year-round. Once your compost pile has transformed into dark, crumbly material, and you can't identify any of the original ingredients, it is ready to use.

Besides being a rich organic fertilizer, compost also can help transform clay or sandy soil into a more plant friendly composition, increase the soil's ability to retain moisture, prevent weeds from growing, and reduce stormwater runoff. According to the EPA, for every 1% that you increase your soil's organic content, you also increase its water absorption capacity by 16,000 gallons of water per acre, down to one foot deep. The beneficial organisms that compost introduces to your soil help perpetuate the benefits of composting by continuing the cycle of organic decomposition. Fall is the perfect time to install new plants, trees and shrubs in your yard, and the availability of your homemade compost will provide numerous benefits to any landscape additions you make. Check out Alabama Cooperative Extension's publications [Backyard Composting](#) and [Commonly Asked Questions](#) to learn more!

What's happening?

Birmingham Botanical Gardens Fall Plant Sale - October 18 -19 - Shop for herbs, trees, native plants, and more! Call 414.3965 or visit www.bbgardens.org for details.

Electronic Recycle Day - October 22 - Bring unwanted electronics to Linn Park from 6 am to 2 pm for FREE recycling. No white goods (washers, dryers, etc.). Call 787.5222 for more information.

Recycling & Waste Reduction Summit - October 30 - Learn how businesses, schools, and communities are tackling waste reduction in innovative ways. Contact [Alabama Environmental Council](#) for information.

Free the Tree - From the landfill, that is. Choose to extend the value of your cut holiday tree and other greenery by [recycling or repurposing](#) it.

Get your green on

The holidays are a time for celebrating family traditions and festive gatherings. Unfortunately holidays also create a lot of trash. According to the Nature Conservancy, household waste in the US increases by more than 25% from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, and trash from gift wrap and gift bags alone totals 4 million tons annually. No matter what holidays you celebrate this fall and winter, there are ways to make them greener. Heat several side dishes together and avoid opening the oven door to peak to reduce energy use. Get creative when it comes to wrapping gifts by using newspaper and other recycled paper. You can even eliminate paper wrap all together: a scarf, t-shirt, reusable shopping bag or other similar item can be used to wrap a gift. Choose rechargeable rather than disposable batteries to accompany electronic gifts. Use LED lights and turn them off during the day. Opt for beeswax or soy candles rather than paraffin. They are made from renewable sources, burn longer and produce less soot. Real or fake tree? The debate goes on, but most experts agree that real trees are the more environmental choice. The majority of holiday trees are grown on farms as a crop, are replanted after harvesting, and can be recycled. If you do choose an artificial tree, keep it for several years to help offset its carbon impact.

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