



City of Dallas
Public Works and Transportation
Storm Water Management Section
Quarterly Newsletter (January – March 2004 Edition)

SPRING SEASON LAWN CARE AND GARDENING, AND STORM WATER POLLUTION PREVENTION

Spring season is getting closer every day. Once again, it is time for lawn care and gardening. Please help us keep our storm water system free from pollutants that come from yards, such as fertilizers, pesticides, yard waste, pet waste, grass clippings, soil erosion and litter. Please remember that when it rains, many of the pollutants that flow onto our streets, sidewalks, parking lots and gutters wash through the inlets (see picture below) down the storm drains.



Please be aware, storm drains do not filter water or debris, nor are they connected to the sanitary sewer system, so any pollutants that flow into the storm drains end up in the nearest creek, stream, lake or river, including our most popular river, the Trinity River (see below), thus polluting our water and harming various types of aquatic life.



How does Springtime Gardening lead to Storm Water Pollution?

Chemicals - Fertilizers and pesticides from home lawns and gardens often run into storm drains during irrigation or rainstorms. These chemicals pollute creeks, streams, lakes and rivers, and therefore the water supply, and are harmful to humans and wildlife.

Yard Clippings - Lawn and garden clippings, when washed down a storm drain, not only can they clog the drain and cause flooding, but they also can decompose in our water bodies, taking away oxygen from the water and therefore killing fish and other aquatic life.

Sediment - Soil from home gardens that is washed down storm drains harms aquatic life. Too much

sediment in water can prevent fish from breathing by clogging their gills and making it difficult for some aquatic life to find places with deep enough water to lay their eggs.

Over-watering – Excessive watering of lawns and gardens can lead to increased runoff carrying pollutants and sediment to storm drains and, ultimately, to our local water bodies. These pollutants, including herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, oils from the street and sediment, contaminate the water thereby increasing public and environmental health risks.

How does Improper Use of Fertilizer lead to Storm Water Pollution?

When carried by rain runoff into the storm drain system, fertilizer eventually drains into creeks, lakes or rivers. Fertilizer reaching a water body causes nutrient pollution. Nutrients consisting of nitrogen and phosphorus, when present in excess, cause rapid algae growth. Algae consume the oxygen, often causing oxygen levels in a water body to fall too low to support aquatic life.

How to Apply Fertilizer Safely

- Purchase slow-release or organic fertilizers. Slow-release nitrogen sources such as compost, blood meal, sulfur-coated urea, and urea formaldehyde help lawns grow at a moderate, even pace. Avoid using quick-release fertilizer.
- Never apply fertilizers on a windy day or when rain is in the forecast.
- Read and follow the directions on the manufacturer's product label. Never use more than what is recommended.
- Calibrate your spreader. Make sure you're applying the correct amount and concentration.
- Gently water your lawn after applying fertilizers. Never wait for a rainstorm to water in your fertilizer. In most cases, the rain will fall too rapidly for the fertilizer to be absorbed, and much of it will wash into the nearest creek, river or stream.
- Sweep up spills on sidewalks and pavements. Throw the swept up granules onto your lawn.

How to Reduce Fertilizer Use

- Landscape with native or adapted plants, trees, and grasses that are drought-tolerant and resist disease. Consider xeriscaping, which reduces the need for fertilizers, pesticides and watering.
- Participate in the "Don't Bag It" program by using a mulching mower (or install a mulching blade to your lawnmower) and cut one-third of the height of the grass. Grass cycling will add nutrients back into your soil.
- Compost yard waste and use it on flowerbeds and gardens.

Why is Smartscape or Xeriscape helpful in Pollution Prevention of Storm Water?

A xeriscaped yard is an array of beautiful and healthy flowers and trees that can be enjoyed throughout the year and offers many benefits for your family and the environment.

Xeriscaping begins with a PLAN – It is important to garden based on your existing soil, moisture conditions, and sun exposure. In your planning stage, group plants together with similar water needs. Or, you may decrease mowing time by replacing turf grass with a different pervious ground cover in areas that don't experience a lot of foot traffic.

Xeriscaping continues with SELECTION – Use perennials, shrubs, and trees that are native to the area because the soil naturally contains many of the nutrients these plants need. The plants will be drought-tolerant and will be able to fight off local diseases and pests. Learn more about native and adapted plants at www.txsmartscape.com.

Xeriscaping ends with CARE – The quality of native and adaptive plants significantly reduces the need for fertilizers, pesticides, and water -- changing the way you care for your yard. This saves time and money and protects our creeks, streams, lakes and rivers.

5 Springtime Tips to Prevent Storm Water Pollution

- Don't over-water your lawn and garden. Over-watering can increase plant disease, deplete the soil of its nutrients, and waste precious water resources. By installing a drip irrigation or micro-spray system, less water is wasted as runoff.
- Take the necessary time to bag your pet's waste – don't just leave it there. Leaving pet waste on the ground increases public health risks by allowing harmful bacteria to wash into the storm drain and eventually into local water bodies.
- Never apply pesticides, fertilizers and herbicides before it rains. Contrary to popular belief, the rain won't help to soak these chemicals into the ground; it will only help create polluted runoff, which will drain into our local creeks and lakes.
- Make use of natural alternatives to pesticides and fertilizers.

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- Never dispose of grass clippings and other yard waste by dumping it or sweeping it into the storm drain; this will deplete oxygen from the water and destroy aquatic life. Instead, compost your yard waste.

Taking your household chemicals, such as paint or automotive fluids, to a Home Collection Center can also help prevent Storm Water Pollution.

Are you planning for Spring cleaning and/or painting your house? Please keep in mind, the City of Dallas offers two (2) free and safe options of disposing household chemicals: The Dallas County Home Collection Chemical Center (HC3), and our bi-annual scheduled Home Chemical Collection Day Events. The HC3 is located at 11234 Plano Road, Dallas, Texas, 75243 (Mapsco 28A). To dispose of your household chemical waste at a collection day event to be held on May 22, 2004, 5525 W. Illinois @ Loop 12, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., or at the HC3, you must bring a photo ID and a recent utility bill as proof of residence. Call (214) 553-1765 for more information or for a schedule of events.

Thanks from the City of Dallas

The City of Dallas would like to express our thanks to the following schools and organizations for allowing us to present Storm Water Pollution Prevention presentations and Trinity Trudy, our Storm Water Mascot: Bayless, B. F. Darrell, Julius Dorsey and Mark Twain Elementary schools, Webb/Royal, Casa View Country Club and Twin Oaks Homeowners Associations, Discovery Fest, the Dallas Aquarium and the DFW Alliance Texas Recycle Day events.

Mark Your Calendar for EARTH DAY 2004 Events

- EarthFest for the Metroplex, Saturday, April 17, 2004, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Texas Discovery Garden, Fair Park.
- EPA's EarthFest 2004, Friday, April 23, 2004, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., downtown on Pegasus, Akard and SBC Plazas.

Contact Us

If you see someone illegally dumping anything into the storm drains, please call 311. If you are interested in the Storm Water Management Section making a presentation to your organization, please contact Sophia Harvey, P.E., or Britt Montgomery at (214) 948-4022.

For more information, log on to our website at www.DallasCityHall.com or let your kids visit www.Trinity-Trudy.org.

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