

Homeowners Key to Community Stormwater Management

Here are several simple, familiar year-round yard care practices that encourage the absorption of rainfall and water runoff into the soil in residential landscapes. These actions benefit your community by preventing flooding, soil erosion, and polluted runoff that threaten our streams, drinking water, and ecosystems.

Seasonal Tips for Year-Round Yard Care

Winter/Spring

January: Use safe de-icers; avoid lawn compaction

- Avoid or minimize using rock salt as a deicer on walks and driveways to prevent polluted runoff from snow and ice melt. Shovel snow and spread sand. Substitute or mix in calcium magnesium acetate, magnesium chloride, or nonchloride de-icing products, which are less harmful to streams and lawns.

- When possible, stay off your lawn when it is covered with ice or snow to avoid compaction of grass plants.

February: Test your soil

- Healthy soil grows healthy turf which can absorb more rain water. Purchase a soil test kit from Penn State and submit soil samples from your lawn to determine the nutrients that may be lacking.

Go to <http://www.aasl.psu.edu>

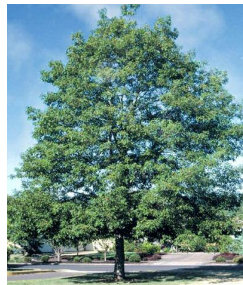
Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCbO5a5JZpk>

- Cut down stalks of ornamental and native warm season grasses left over the winter for bird habitat.

March: Plant a large stature tree

- Large trees are great stormwater control. At maturity, they intercept over 1,000 gallons

of rainwater each year. Their foliage and bark reduce runoff by intercepting rainfall, and their broad-leaf canopies also reduce the force of rain hitting the soil, reducing erosion. Where possible, plant a large stature broad-leaf tree such as an oak, maple, or black gum. Avoid pruning their crowns to allow full canopies to develop.



- This spring or fall explore converting a corner of your property to native warm season grasses. Their extensive roots of 3 to 7 feet deep enrich the soil and absorb many times the amount of rainwater that turf grass does.



Panicum virgatum 'Shenandoah'

April: Leave grass clippings; mulch properly

- Cut grass at 2½ to 3 inches tall. Mow often enough so that clippings are not longer than one-third (1/3) of the grass blade, so they can decompose easily into the soil.

- Excess nitrogen and phosphorus from lawn fertilization is frequently a pollutant to streams, fostering the growth of algae which deplete oxygen levels, harming fish. Spare your stream by avoiding spring fertilization, and leave your grass clippings on your lawn instead. Grass clippings supply between 25% and 50% of nitrogen and phosphorus needs.

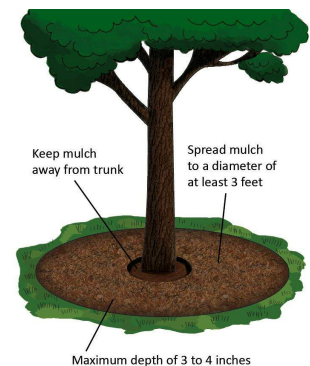


- Mulched beds trap and infiltrate more rainwater than lawn or bare soil. Spread out any excess mulch away from trees and shrubs, making sure the tree's

“flare” is exposed, and allowing it to decompose. Top off with a thin layer of fresh mulch, making sure the mulch is no deeper than 3” and does not touch the tree bark. Never spread fresh woodchips around trees or shrubs; their decomposition will harm plants.



Volcano mulching suffocates surface roots of trees.



Proper mulching can help keep a tree healthy. (Sarah Cox, Purdue University)

May: Replace some turf with mulched beds, a rain garden, or pocket meadow

- Create new areas in the yard that will absorb roof water from downspouts, runoff from paved areas, and puddles in compacted soil areas. Start a flower or vegetable patch, build a bog or rain garden, or establish a pocket meadow, to absorb rainwater. Mulch all bare soil in planted beds and under trees and shrubs with composted leaf mulch from your municipal leaf composting operation.

- Learn more from downloading CRC's rain garden brochure: <http://www.crcwatersheds.org/resources/view/96> Check out Swarthmore College's Sustainability web site: <http://www.scottarboretum.org/Sustainability/our-practices.html>

