

# utility update

## Clean Water Begins in Your Own Back Yard

What we do in our yard affects our local waterways. The good news is that we can care for our yard in a way that prevents pollutants from going into local streams and rivers. Clean water not only looks good, it's vital to life. Below are some ideas for your home turf.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Sediment, or eroded soil, is the top polluter of central Ohio's streams and rivers. Healthy grass provides environmental services that include slowing or filtering rainwater and preventing soil erosion.

### COMMIT to CLEAN WATER

The City of Columbus, Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District, and local lawn care companies have partnered to encourage residents to do their part for water quality by caring for their lawn properly. Visit [getgrassy.org](http://getgrassy.org) to learn more, and take our pledge to receive a free gift.



### LAWN CARE TIPS - MOW to GROW

- Most lawns need to be cut every four to five days, not every seven to ten days, like most of us tend to do.
- Follow the one-third rule: never remove more than a third of the grass blade.
- Don't scalp your lawn if spring rain or vacation leaves you with really tall grass. Instead, gradually reduce cutting height to keep a healthy balance between root and blade growth. If you keep scalping your lawn, you won't have to mow as often because your grass will die.
- Keep your grass tall at 2½" to 3½" to preserve moisture and out-compete weeds.
- Sharp blades make a difference. Dull blades use more gasoline, and they chew and rip grass so that it is more likely to succumb to heat and drought stress. Your mower blades should be sharpened 1-3 times/year and replaced if bent, chipped, or cracked.

### DISPOSE of YARD WASTE PROPERLY

Dumping yard waste into storm drains or waterways adds excess nutrients to the water, can clog the drains and contribute to roadway flooding; and it is illegal.

The Com-Til Compost Facility accepts yard waste free of charge, year round. Visit [columbus.gov/com-til](http://columbus.gov/com-til) for additional details and disposal options. Better yet, compost and mulch your yard waste.



Other tips include:

- Sweep outdoor surfaces with a broom rather than hosing them down. When using the hose, let your grass absorb the waste water instead of sending it to street.
- Save yourself some cleanup by preventing vehicle leaks and spills from reaching the surface. Simply place drip pans or plastic sheeting under your work area.
- If a spill does occur, use an absorbent material such as cat litter, sweep it up and discard it in the trash.
- When cleaning items such as lawn furniture, use a bucket and sponge instead of a hose.

### WASH YOUR CAR IN THE GRASS

Let soapy water soak into the ground by washing your car on an unpaved surface. This way the oils, dirt, and debris are filtered by the grass and not going into the storm sewer (which could lead directly to the river). If you have a hose, check it for leaks—even a tiny leak can mean big money over time.

If you can't wash your car over grass, take it to a commercial car wash. These drain into the sanitary sewer which conveys wastewater to a treatment plant that cleans the waste out of the water before it is emptied into the river.

## LET US KNOW

It takes a community to keep our streams and rivers clean. Please let us know if you see anything other than rain water entering a storm drain on your street by calling 614-645-STREAM (7873) in Columbus, or call the Ohio EPA at 1-800-282-9378.

Small actions like picking up trash and debris before it washes into a storm drain help keep our water clean.



## LET OTHERS KNOW

Storm sewer? Sanitary sewer? It's hard to keep track of all those pipes running underground and out of sight. Take part in Columbus' storm drain marking program and you can help remind people that the storm drains on your street empty directly into our rivers. Program limited to City of Columbus storm drains only.

Visit [columbus.gov/stormdrainmarker](http://columbus.gov/stormdrainmarker) or call 614-645-2926.

## BAG the WASTE

Did you know your pet can impact water quality? Dog waste has bacteria that is not healthy for the people, fish and wildlife that live and play in our waterways. Check out this video to learn more: <https://tinyurl.com/PUP-MOV>



So if you are a dog owner, "doo" the right thing and take the pledge to PUP (Pick Up Poop) at [columbus.gov/pup](http://columbus.gov/pup) and receive a PUP prize of biodegradable pet waste bags. Also look for pet waste stations in Columbus parks.

## WANT to DO MORE?

The GreenSpot Community Backyards program, in partnership with Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District, offers virtual workshops led by water conservation experts, where you can ask questions and get more information about backyard conservation topics that interest you. Each workshop explains different actions you can take to prevent water pollution. At the end of the workshop you'll receive a voucher for a \$25 rebate on native perennial plants, or a \$50 rebate on native trees or shrubs, a compost bin, or a rain barrel. You can also take an informative online course and quiz to be eligible for the rebate if you cannot attend a workshop.

Visit [GreenSpotBackyards.org](http://GreenSpotBackyards.org) for more information.



## VOLUNTEER for CLEAN WATER

If you are interested in protecting our natural resources, get involved in our public education programs. You, your community or school group can participate in stream-bank litter clean-ups, invasive plant removal and many other activities that promote awareness and appreciation of our natural waterways.



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