

Winter Gardening



As the holiday season approaches, many of us turn our efforts from taking care of the garden to preparing for the upcoming festivities. But a few simple tasks can keep your yard looking great throughout the winter:

- Improve your soil by adding compost to vegetable, perennial, and shrub beds.
- Use cloth sheets or blankets instead of plastic sheets to wrap plants during a freeze. Cloth better protects plants from freezing winds and can be reused next year.
- Rake the leaves in your yard, and keep a stockpile to use in compost or mulch through spring and summer.
- Turn off your irrigation system from November through February. Native and adapted plants need little or no supplemental water during the winter. Cutting back on watering also saves money on your water bill.

FREE Lawn Care Brochures

The Watershed Protection Group would like to help Harris County residents keep our waterways clean. Everyone can help keep our waterways clean and avoid lawn runoff from getting into our storm drains. Our lawn care post card piece has tips on taking care of your lawn, such as:

- Watering your lawn
- Using the correct amount of fertilizer
- How to dispose of lawn waste
- Benefits of leaving grass clippings on the lawn

The post card is excellent for homeowners and lawn professionals. You can also request our lawn care brochure, *Start a grass roots movement*, which has tips on fertilizing, composting and other lawn care tips. Request your brochure at www.CleanWaterways.org.



“We have forgotten how to be good guests, how to walk lightly on the earth as its other creature do.”
- Barbara Ward, *Only One Earth*, 1972.

Why Recycle Your Old Batteries?



Every year, Americans buy, use and throw out billions of batteries. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Americans purchase nearly 3 billion dry-cell batteries every year. To help us have a cleaner environment, batteries should be recycled.

Batteries contain heavy metals such as mercury, lead, cadmium, and nickel, which can contaminate the environment when they are thrown out into the trash.

When incinerated with the rest of the trash, certain metals might be released into the air or can concentrate in the ash produced by the combustion process. Recycling batteries keeps heavy metals out of landfills and the air. It also saves resources because recovered plastic and metals can be used to make new batteries.

Another option is to purchase rechargeable batteries to extend the life of batteries. Over its useful life, each rechargeable battery may substitute for hundreds of single-use batteries. Rechargeable batteries can also be recycled at most retail locations.

WHAT TYPE OF BATTERIES CAN BE RECYCLED?

Lead-Acid Automobile Batteries

Nearly 90 percent of all lead-acid batteries can be recycled. In Texas, no person may place a used lead-acid battery in mixed municipal solid waste or discard or otherwise dispose of a lead-acid. Ask about your recycling option at your local retailer, wholesaler, or any recycling facility.

Dry-Cell Batteries

- Alkaline batteries, which are used in flashlights, remote controls and other appliances.
- Button-Cell Batteries, most small round “button-cell” type batteries found in items such as watches and hearing aids contain mercury, silver, cadmium, lithium, or other heavy metals as their main component.
- Rechargeable Batteries, the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC), targets four kinds of rechargeable batteries for recycling: nickel-cadmium (Ni-CD), nickel metal hydride, lithium ion, and small-sealed lead.

Harris County also sponsors One Day Household Hazardous Waste Collection (HHW) Events where you can bring your dry cell batteries and lead-acid automobile batteries. Visit our web site for dates and schedule of the next HHW events in your area or call us at 713-290-3000.



No Need to Trash your TV

Consumers will have the holidays to decide whether to purchase a new digital TV or a digital converter box. The FCC is going to require all televisions to run a digital signal by February 19, 2009.

For consumers who choose to buy a new TV, we encourage them to recycle their unwanted TVs, which recover valuable materials from the circuit boards, metal wiring, leaded glass, and plastics. Even the smallest amounts of lead can be a serious issue, and we're talking about eight pounds per unit.

Recycling your old TV is the best way to prevent millions of TVs from ending up in our waste streams. By recycling your old analog TV, you can prevent toxic chemicals from TV cathode ray tubes (CRTs) and other electronic waste to leach out of landfills and pollute groundwater. Visit our web site for dates and locations of the next Household Hazardous Waste Collection event that the County provides every Spring. You can also call us at 713-290-3000.



Just for Floats!

Did you know that 23 percent of U.S. waste material is potential compost?

Did you know that plain white paper takes up the most space in U.S. landfills?

Did you know that one oil change can contaminate 1 million gallons of fresh water?

Did you know that nonpoint sources (natural and human made pollutants) is the leading cause of water quality problems in the U.S.?

source: epa.gov



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CURRENTS

www.CleanWaterways.org

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‘Tis the Season to Recycle

The holiday season is a time of celebration with family and friends. But we all know that in the midst of all the celebrating, sometimes it's hard to remember the impact the season can have on our natural resources. Holiday parties and other activities present many opportunities to reduce waste through reuse and recycling. We would like to offer some tips for conserving these resources while celebrating the joys of the season.



Conserve Energy and Natural Resources

Energy consumption can be particularly high during the holidays. You can conserve energy (and save on your utility bills) by lowering the temperature on your thermostat and wearing a sweater in your home; putting your lights on an electric timer; or turning off or unplugging holiday lights during the day. Also, if you are traveling during the holidays consider taking public transportation or car pooling with friends and relatives.

Buy smart

When you are purchasing gifts for your loved ones, consider those made of recycled content. Bring a bag to the store with you so you can don't have to take an unnecessary one. Use wrapping paper that is made of recycled paper and recycle it afterwards or consider even

wrapping gifts with cloth, newsprint, or just use a bow. Newsprint may be considered tacky by some but you can customize the gift wrap for the recipient. Use the comics for children, the sports section for men and the style section for women. If the gifts you purchase need batteries, get the recipient rechargeable batteries and a charger.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Consider buying a live tree with roots so it can be planted after the holidays; otherwise, make sure you put your tree out for recycling. That holiday tree can make great mulch for the spring planting season. Send e-cards instead of paper ones or purchase recycled paper cards. Be sure to recycle the ones you receive, too. And, don't forget to compost all those food scraps from your holiday dinners. Like your tree, they can help make beautiful spring flowers and plants. Review the list of recyclables that your city accepts and be sure to send all the applicable paper, plastic, glass bottles and aluminum cans to the recycling center.

Be sure to visit our web site at www.CleanWaterways.org for more information on our public education campaign and to download our latest brochure and educational materials.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE WATERSHED PROTECTION GROUP!

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