

Just for Floats!

Did you know that Cigarette filters are the number one trash item found on beaches?

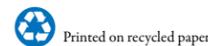
Did you know that the trash most commonly found in municipal landfills is plain old paper?

Did you know that scrap tires are typically used as a supplement to traditional fuel such as coal or wood?

Did you know that the average home can accumulate as much as 100 pounds of HHW in the garage and in storage closets?



Harris County
Watershed Protection Group
9800 Northwest Freeway, Suite 305
(713) 290-3000



Printed on recycled paper

Calendar of Events

August 20, 2008

Free YardWise Class
Lone Star College-CyFair Branch Library
9191 Barker Cypress
Cypress, TX 77433
9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

September 27, 2008

Household Hazardous Waste
Collection Event
Annex 13 and Sports Complex
I-10 and Barker Cypress
8:00 AM - 2:00 PM

November 15, 2008

Household Hazardous Waste
Collection Event
Sam Houston Race Track
8:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Visit our website at www.CleanWaterways.org
for more information of these events or call us
at 713-290-3000.

CURRENTS

www.CleanWaterways.org

Volume 12, June 2008

Keeping Beachgoers Protected

The summer means longer days perfect for visiting your local beach. Beaches are a place to play, watch wildlife, fish, and swim. With beaches giving us so much, we have to protect them from a variety of different problems. Learn more about protecting your beach and how easy it is to do your part.

Beach contamination is often from storm water running off streets, fields, forests, and other sources. Pollution can also arrive at a beach simply by people dropping trash. Storms are also a major problem; some sewer systems overflow directly into rivers, which eventually carry pollution and bacteria to beach waters. In addition, pollution can come from heavy concentrations of animals such as dogs.



- Dispose of used oil, antifreeze, paints, and other household chemicals properly, not in storm sewers or drains. If your community does not already have a program for collecting household hazardous wastes, call us at 713-290-3000 for dates and locations of upcoming collection events.
- Clean up spilled brake fluid, oil, grease, and antifreeze. Do not hose them into the street where they can eventually reach local streams and lakes.
- Control soil erosion on your property by planting ground cover and stabilizing erosion-prone areas.
- Support local government officials in enforcing construction erosion/sediment control ordinances in your community.
- Have your septic system inspected and pumped, at a minimum, every 3-5 years so that it operates properly.
- Purchase household detergents and cleaners that are low in phosphorous to reduce the amount of nutrients discharged into our lakes, streams and coastal waters.

Non-Point Source Control

“Non-point source” means pollution that is swept into water bodies by water moving over and through the ground, like pesticides on a lawn. What can you do to prevent non-point source pollution? Here are some tips:

- Keep litter, pet wastes, leaves, and debris out of street gutters and storm drains-these outlets drain directly to lakes, streams, rivers, and wetlands.
- Apply lawn and garden chemicals sparingly and according to directions.

We can all work together to reduce and prevent nonpoint source pollution. We all play a part. Nonpoint source pollution results from a wide variety of human activities on the land. Each of us can contribute to the problem without even realizing it. Visit our web site for more information, www.CleanWaterways.org.

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Get YardWise and Save Money



Being Yardwise simply means working with Mother Nature to keep your yard healthy and beautiful while saving money. Your yard is your little piece of the planet, the environment over which you have the most control. Planning a

beautiful, healthy-trouble-free yard begins with asking three basic questions.

- What kind of grasses, trees, and other plants will thrive in my region?
- How many of each kind of plant do I want?
- How should they be placed and arranged in my yard?

The following strategies will boost the health of your yard and garden, and they will minimize pests, water and chemical usage, soil erosion, runoff, and pollution.

Start with a Plan

Begin with a well-planned design. Sketch your yard showing the location of existing structures, trees, shrubs, and grass. Graph paper will help you estimate your needs more accurately. As you plan, consider budget, appearance, function, maintenance, and water requirements.

Reduce Thirsty Turf Grass Area

In most landscaped areas, turf grasses have the highest water demand and the highest maintenance requirements of all plants.

Alternative plant areas and other forms of ground cover can reduce your ongoing expenditures of time, energy, and money.



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead (1901-1978) quoted in John M. Richardson, ed. *Making it Happen*, 1982

Grow Native Landscape Plants

Native plants are the best choice for trouble-free gardening. They need less water and fertilizer, and have fewer pest problems than plants imported from other areas.

Practice Diversity

Incorporate a variety of plants. Diverse plants provide food and cover for a variety of living things. Diversity minimizes damage from pests because many attack only one plant species.

Install Low-Maintenance Design Features

Lawn edging and hard surfaces between turf and other landscape features reduce weeds, trimming, and use of herbicides. Dense plantings provide shade that keeps out invading weeds. Avoid narrow strips or odd shapes of turf grass that will be difficult to irrigate without wasting water.

Minimize Soil Disturbance

Avoid frequent, deep cultivation, which can damage plant roots, dry out the soil, disturb healthy soil organisms, and bring weed seeds to the surface where they will germinate.

Design Your Landscape to Minimize Runoff Pollution

Take note of slopes, and consider including buffer zones of turf grass or other thick vegetation to absorb runoff from buildings and patios, and to reduce runoff into driveways and streets. Place plants with higher water requirements on the lower end of slopes.

Put Trees to Work Reducing Your Energy Costs

Trees not only increase residential property value, they attract songbirds and other entertaining wildlife. In addition, deciduous trees planted appropriately along the south and west sides of buildings can reduce summer air conditioning costs by up to 20 percent. In winter they lose their leaves, allowing the sun's rays to shine through and help warm your house. 💧

Keeping Fats, Oils, and Grease out of the Sewer System

Fats, oils, and grease—FOG—comes from meat fats in food scraps, cooking oil, shortening, lard, butter and margarine, gravy, and food products such as mayonnaise, salad dressings, and sour cream.

FOG poured down kitchen drains accumulates inside sewer pipes. As the FOG builds up, it restricts the flow in the pipe and can cause untreated wastewater to back up into homes and businesses, resulting in high costs for cleanup and restoration.

Manholes can overflow into parks, yards, streets, and storm drains, allowing FOG to contaminate local waters, including drinking water. Exposure to untreated wastewater is a public-health hazard.

FOG discharged into septic systems and drain fields can cause malfunctions, resulting in more frequent tank pump-outs and other expenses.

Restaurants, cafeterias, and fast-food establishments spend tens of thousands of dollars on plumbing emergencies each year to deal with grease blockages and pump out grease traps and interceptors. Some cities also charge businesses for the repair of sewer pipes and spill cleanup if they can attribute the blockage to a particular business. Some cities also add a surcharge to wastewater bills if a business exceeds a specified discharge limit.

Reducing Fats, Oils, and Grease in Your Home or Apartment

- Recycle used cooking oil or properly dispose of it by pouring it into a sealable container and placing the sealed container in the trash. To recycle large amounts, such as what's left over from a catfish fry or frying a turkey, contact a local recycler by looking in the yellow pages under “Greases” or “Rendering.” If you have a lot of oil to dispose of, use clay cat litter. Just mix the litter, a little at a time, into the oil. When all the oil has been absorbed, pour the cat litter into a trash bag, seal the bag, then dispose of it in your regular trash.
- Scrape food scraps into the trash, not the sink.
- Wipe pots, pans, and dishes with dry paper towels before rinsing or washing them. Then throw away the paper towels.

Communities spend billions of dollars every year unplugging or replacing grease-blocked pipes, repairing pump stations, and cleaning up costly and illegal wastewater spills. Excessive FOG in the sewer system can affect local wastewater rates.

So do your part, keeping FOG out of the sewer system helps everyone in the community. 💧



Scouts Help With Storm Water Inlet Marking Program SWIM

With the help of local Boy Scout groups, the Watershed Protection Group is reaching its goal of marking every storm drain in Harris County. The Boy Scout Troop 1333, Cub Scouts and leaders from pack 1324 marked nearly 200 storm drains as part of their service project.

Scouts also posted 300 door hangers to educate residents about the SWIM program and what they can do to prevent storm water pollution.

Along their marking routes, the scouts picked up trash that could cause storm-water pollution.

Many thanks to this wonderful group of young men for helping us reach our goal.

