

# Tips for preventing pollution

Information on ways you can prevent water pollution in your home and business.



**Auto Care**



**Home Care**



**Yard Care**



**Large Lot and Farm Care**

## Auto Care

**Recycle your used motor oil.** (link to Environmental Services residential automotive doc) There are a number of places in Greene County that accept used motor oil at no cost. If you change your own oil, collect the drips and clean up spills.

**Maintain your car** and fix any oil, radiator, or transmission leaks as soon as you see them.

**Never pour waste oil or antifreeze** on the ground, into the street or down a storm drain.

**Wash your car** at commercial carwashes that can recycle water into the sanitary sewer. If you wash your car at home, do it on the grass, which can absorb some of the runoff. Detergents used to wash cars can contain chemicals harmful to aquatic life.

## Home Care

**Buy and use** environmentally friendly and biodegradable products. Choose safer, multi-purpose cleaners marked with only a “caution” warning, rather than products with “poison” and “danger” on the label. Visit [River Smart](#) to find recipes for inexpensive, safe alternatives to items such as chlorine, phosphate products and solvents like paint thinner.

**If you do have hazardous chemicals** (link to Environmental Services landing page) around the house, they can be dropped off at the Environmental Services Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day.

**Phase out phosphates.** Avoid using phosphates in detergents as they create algae blooms in waterways, which in turn choke habitat and deprive fish and other species of oxygen.

**Paint is a hazardous substance** as a liquid. If you have leftover paint from a

project it can be dried and disposed (link to Environmental Services paint disposal doc) safely in the trash.

**Maintain your septic system.** Malfunctioning septic systems are a major cause of river pollution. Have them pumped and inspected every 3 to 5 years. Most of what you put down your garbage disposal can be composted into rich soil.

**Use a proper container** for your trash and recyclables. Don't put trash into the street or gutter where it can be washed into the storm drainage system.

## Yard Care

**Use caution with home and garden chemicals.** When it comes to pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers, buy only what you need and apply sparingly. Follow the manufacturer's directions. Never apply any of these chemicals before an anticipated rain.

**Store household maintenance** projects away from rain and runoff. Clean up spills.

**Reduce the amount** of impervious surfaces (asphalt and concrete) around your home. Look into alternatives such as paving blocks, gravel, cobbles, brick, natural stone, and pulverized glass in driveways, parking lots and walkways.

**Chose low-maintenance native plants** that require fewer chemicals and less watering.

**Pick up after your pets.**

**Properly manage and dispose** of your yard waste, particularly tree and bush clippings. You can create a compost pile where the material will not be picked up by storm water. In addition, the Environmental Services Division offers yard waste drop-off locations (link to Environmental Services residential yard waste page) in Xenia, Beavercreek, Fairborn, and Bellbrook.

**Control erosion** in your yard by landscaping bare areas.

**Using a mulching mower.** Grass can be a good fertilizer. Allow the nutrients of grass clippings to fertilize the lawn.

**Use water efficiently.** Do not water your lawn-it will go dormant in dry weather, and then return to life when rains return. If you must water your flowers and shrubs, water in the early morning during low evaporation.

**Sweep rather than use the hose** to clean off your sidewalks and driveway. Hosing for 15 minutes can waste as much as 150 gallons of water. Water runoff from hard

surfaces carries contaminants into our streams and rivers.

**Don't blow soil, grass or leaves** into the street or storm drain. Soils and sediment cloud waterways.

## **Large Lot and Farm Care**

**Stop erosion** by planting ground cover to stabilize slopes, shorelines and embankments.

**Buffer your waterways.** Create buffer strips with native vegetation along waterways, such as rivers, brooks, ponds, streams, lakes and wetlands. If you are using grassed filter strips, mow the strip two or three times a year to maintain a thick, vegetative cover. Buffers will stabilize your banks as well as help keep polluted runoff from reach the stream.

**Give the fish shade,** too. Forested areas adjacent to water bodies should be left undisturbed, which will provide shade for the fish and other critters in the waterway. It will also keep the waterways from getting warmer, a process that promotes algae growth.

**Protect nesting birds** in your fields. To avoid impact on ground-nesting birds, mowing should be limited to spring or fall. It is also best to harvest the mowed grass to allow for thicker growth. This will remove nutrients that could be released into the waterway during decomposition.

**Use setbacks** to help wildlife and you. Setbacks from waterways protect the buffer strip vegetation, provide a wildlife corridor and reduce exposure to floods. Effective setbacks still allow for certain types of "low impact" non-inhabitable development such as docks and open gazebos.

To locate more information regarding "best management practices" for farms and forests to reduce erosion on your land and enhance water quality within your watershed, contact the [Ohio Department of Natural Resources](#) or [The Ohio State University Extension Office - Greene County](#).