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BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES for CLEAN WATER



How to Properly Handle Yard Waste

The Macomb County Public Works Office (MCPWO) works with local municipalities, businesses and residents to promote the best management practices for clean water to enhance the quality of life in Macomb County. When it rains, water that drains from buildings, roads or other hard surfaces deposits directly into your local storm drains and begins a journey that ultimately ends in Lake St. Clair. It is critical that we eliminate pollution and other contaminants before they enter our streams, rivers and lakes. Clean water is vital not only to the quality of life in Macomb County, but can serve as a critical component of economic development in our communities.



WHAT IS IT?

Yard waste is waste generated from cutting the grass, gardening, weeding, and general landscaping done by residents and businesses. It is important to know what to do with the yard waste generated from regular maintenance because it can increase the sediment and algae problems when it ends up in the local rivers and lakes. If you reside along a waterway, grass clippings and leaves that enter the water can restrict flow of water, impact water quality and subject the public to the threat of flooding. Any residual fertilizers and pesticides that may have been used, may run off into the water after a rain event and impact water quality. Even if you do not live near a waterway, rain can move yard waste into a storm drain which will carry the untreated water to the end of the drain system where it enters the local waterways as polluted storm drain water.



BEST MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

According to *What You Can Do About Lawn Care* published by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), there are recommended management strategies to prevent yard waste and the chemicals that are used for landscaping from entering the waterways.



1. Keep fertilizer and lawn clippings on the lawn.
2. Mow high and leave the clippings.
3. Fertilize in the fall.
4. Hire a knowledgeable contractor.
5. Create a fertilizer-free zones.
6. Reduce your lawn area.

Lawn care can actually be cheaper and easier if you mow your grass high (about 3 inches) and leave the clippings in the grass for nutrients. Taller lawns can shade out weeds and promote healthy root growth.

EDUCATION

Multiple organizations and websites can educate residents on how to handle yard waste. Learning how to mow your grass for a healthier lawn, compost whenever possible, tips on watering and alternatives to raking leaves are all ways to make yard work more efficient and less work. Healthy lawn and garden programs are offered on a regular basis. Here are a few websites that offer classes on different ways to handle your yard waste:



<https://www.crowc.org/programs/stormwater-ed/>

https://www.canr.msu.edu/home_lawns/

http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/composting_a_smart_gardening_practice_to_recycle_garden_and_yard_waste

<https://semcog.org/Protect-Our-Waterways#770116-what-you-can-do-with-landscaping>

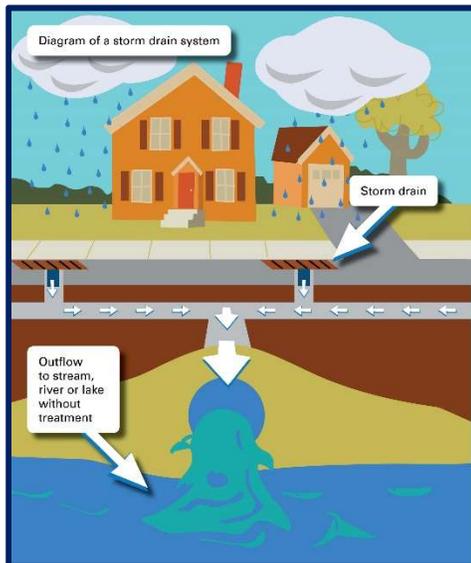
<https://semcog.org/Protect-Our-Waterways#770115-what-you-can-do-about-lawn-care>

RESOURCES

Maintaining the yard is a responsibility for every landowner and yard waste does not need to leave your property. There are many resources and organizations that provided multiple options for proper yard maintenance. Following best management practices for yard waste will enhance the environment and prevent yard waste from entering the waterways through runoff either naturally or through untreated storm drain discharge. It is rewarding when you maintain your yard to benefit the environment and our local waterways.

https://www.canr.msu.edu/home_lawns/

<https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home>



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

It is the landowner's responsibility to maintain their yard waste so that it does not enter a county drain directly or indirectly through a storm drain. The Michigan Drain Code does provide some limitations on property owners with regard to what you can and cannot place in the drain easement, but it is still your property to maintain as you see fit.

Following proper guidelines prevents discharge into the local waterways through stormwater runoff that can enter the local storm drain system or through dumping of chemicals or natural debris in a county drain.

It is everyone's responsibility to keep our waterways clean in Macomb County. Working together on best management practices for clean water, we can improve the quality of life by having clean water to drink, recreate in and use in everyday life.

For more information - publicworks.macombgov.org

DISCLAIMER - Please note that the MCPWO has provided external links because they provide additional information that may be useful or interesting. MCPWO cannot attest to the accuracy of non-MCPWO information provided by third party websites and does not endorse any non-government organizations or their products or services.