



Yard Care Pollution Prevention

Everyone loves a beautiful yard. Everyone loves a beautiful creek. Clean creeks are important to providing vital fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, educational opportunities, and beauty to Santa Rosa. Unfortunately, yard work, landscaping, and gardening can contribute to creek pollution. Through inattention or carelessness lawn clippings, leaves, soil, pet waste, pesticides and fertilizer can be carried by rain water into our local creeks. The gutters along our City streets lead to storm drains that flow directly to local creeks. What you do in and around your yard and garden has a direct impact on your local waterways. Follow these tips and help our local creeks today.

Fertilizer and Pesticides

- Use mulch or compost rather than fertilizer for healthier plants. Benefits include holding moisture longer, helping prevent weeds, and saving money.
- If you must use fertilizer, do so sparingly. Excess fertilizer can wash into our waterways and increase algae growth, which results in decreased oxygen in the water for fish to use.
- Consider chemical-free pest control options. For more information please refer to the OUR WATER OUR WORLD fact sheets found in many local nurseries or on the internet.
- Never apply pesticides or fertilizer prior to a rain storm. Check the forecast and plan your yard work during dry weather.
- Store fertilizers, pesticides and any other yard chemicals in the garage or a shed.
- Leftover fertilizer and pesticides can be shared with a neighbor or disposed of at the Household Toxics Facility. Call the Eco-Desk at (707) 565-3375 for more information.

Gardening Tips

- Sweep or rake grass clippings, leaves and yard waste, and dispose of in your yard waste container.
- Do not hose down the sidewalk, driveway, or gutter after working in the yard.
- Excess dirt should be swept into landscape areas.
- Fix or update poorly operating sprinklers. Watering the sidewalk instead of your lawn wastes money and water and washes contaminants into our creeks. For more ideas and garden tips visit Water Use Efficiency or call the Water-Use Efficiency Hotline at (707) 543-3985.
- Keep as much of your yard landscaped as possible. Landscaped areas absorb more rain water than unplanted soils. Healthy plants and soil cleans the rain water as it absorbs into the ground.

- The chemicals used to create bright attractive bark mulch also leach toxins into the storm drain system. Limit the use of these products and locate them away from the street gutters and yard drains.

Compost for Clean Water

Composting yard waste is an environmentally sound way of reducing solid waste by recycling a useful resource. To prevent garden clippings and yard waste from flowing into the storm water system, place them in a yard waste container or create a compost pile in your yard. All yard waste collected curbside is taken to Sonoma Compost where the yard waste from the entire county is processed and re-sold to landscape contractors and homeowners as a mulch or soil amendment. Contact Sonoma Compost at (707) 664-9113 for more information.

Do not sweep piles of leaves into the gutter, debris piles swept into gutters will flow into local waterways. Whether you choose to put your yard waste in a yard waste container or compost at home, here are some Composting Basics:

Do Compost

- " Grass and lawn clippings
- " Hay
- " Fruit, vegetables, and grains
- " Leaves
- " Manure
- " Weeds
- " Woodchips and sawdust
- " Straw

Do Not Compost

- " Chemically treated wood products
- " Diseased plants
- " Pet waste
- " Meat, bones, and dairy food waste

Mulch as Weed Prevention

Before you reach for the weed killer, consider covering the area to be weed free with a thick mulch, burlap or landscape cloth, paper sheeting, or cardboard. These options suppress weeds without chemicals and allow rain water to percolate into the ground. Avoid using plastic, it does not allow water to percolate into the ground and it can become a trash problem.

Your Pets and Clean Water

Clean yards mean clean creeks; unless pet waste is disposed of properly, it enters our local creeks harming fish and other aquatic life. The bacteria found in pet waste is a health risk that can make people and wildlife sick. When it rains, these harmful bacteria are washed into the storm drains and ultimately local creeks. It is also important to pick-up after your pet in your neighborhood and parks. Make it a rule to never leave your home without a plastic bag for doggy duty. Pick up the waste with the bag, seal it and dispose of in a garbage can.

Contact Information

- For more information on storm water and the City's storm drain system call the City of Santa Rosa's Utilities Department at (707) 543-4200, and ask for Storm Water.

- For proper disposal questions on hazardous materials and recycling call Eco-Desk at (707) 565-DESK (3375), or visit Recycle Now.
- If spilled material reaches the storm drain system call (707) 543-3800 to report it.
- If spilled material contains hazardous materials call 911 or (707) 528-5151.
- For more information about obtaining a Wastewater Discharge Permit, visit Santa Rosa Environmental Compliance section or call (707) 543-3369.
- Information on proper storage/disposal of hazardous materials contact the Santa Rosa Fire Department at (707) 543-3500.