

Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance

Landscaping features can improve the curb appeal of a business or residential building, absorb and filter stormwater runoff from paved surfaces and provide green space for recreation and even urban habitat. Trees and shrubs also provide natural screening and help buffer noise, while vegetation helps to improve air quality.

Many landscaped areas require maintenance to keep them healthy and looking attractive. Lawn care and landscaping practices are a common source of water pollution. Fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides contain chemicals that are harmful to the environment, wildlife and humans. Proper handling and disposal of these products is important. Using native plants can reduce the amount of maintenance requirements and provide habitat for beneficial insects and birds.

TO PREVENT WATER POLLUTION

- Avoid or limit the use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. Avoid applications before or during heavy rainfall events or sprinkler use. Consider the use of certified compost and other organic alternatives to harmful inorganic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.
- Commercial businesses should refer to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services website to learn more about applying pesticides on their property: www.vdacs.virginia.gov/pesticides/certification.shtml.
- Select appropriate fertilizers and read and follow the manufacturer's recommendations and directions for proper use. Consider testing your soil to see if you need fertilizer. For information about soil testing, contact the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, Fairfax County Office at 703-324-5369, TTY 711.
- Do not over fertilize. Information regarding how to properly fertilize landscaped areas can be found on the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District's website at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/lawntips.pdf.
- When using spreader applicators, avoid getting fertilizer on paved areas. Sweep up any granules off hard surfaces and put them back onto the lawn or properly dispose of the excess.
- Spot apply pesticides as opposed to broadcast spraying or blanket applications.



TROUBLED WATERS

Soil and silt in the water increase water temperature and murkiness that may harm fish and their food supply.



DO YOU KNOW?

It's not just soil going down the drain. Sediment carries nutrients, bacteria, oil, fertilizer, pesticides and heavy metals that may pollute stormwater and our streams.

- When possible, remove unwanted vegetation manually instead of using herbicides.
- Do not wash fertilizer spreaders or other landscape equipment where the wash water can run off into a storm drain.
- Do not blow grass clippings or leaves onto sidewalks or streets if they are not going to be picked up in the immediate future. Do not dump yard waste into storm drains.
- Cover bare ground with vegetation or mulch to prevent soil erosion.
- For residential buildings, consider installing a pet waste pick-up bag dispenser and receptacle.
- Consider replacing areas of high maintenance turf with areas of native plants, groundcovers, shrubs and trees. Consider planting gardens, hedgerows and wildflower meadows.
- Control areas where pedestrian traffic has damaged turf or plants. Consider using alternative materials such as river rock, wood chips or mulch in heavy use areas.
- Consider using a lawn care company that has entered into a voluntary agreement with Virginia's Department of Conservation and Recreation to protect and improve Virginia's ground and surface waters. Search lawn care operators at the following website to find this list: www.dcr.virginia.gov/stormwater_management/documents/wqagree.pdf.



"A Virginian's Year Round Guide to Yard Care" is a good resource for information on maintaining healthy landscapes. The guidebook can be found online at: www.dcr.virginia.gov/stormwater_management/documents/yardcare.pdf.



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