

Yard Waste Polluting Our Waterways

Did you know that grass and leaves can harm our creeks and streams?



Illegal dumping of grass clippings that will enter the stream in the next rain event



Algae bloom caused by excess nutrients as grass and leaf material breaks down

Few, if any, property owners think it's acceptable to dump tires, machine parts, plastics and other unnatural trash into our waterways. But many still believe it's okay to deposit organic material like leaves and grass onto a streambank, in a storm drain, or into the stream itself.

Well, when it comes to stream dumping, even organic doesn't "cut it."

Many leaves will naturally fall into the water, but as homeowners, we should be mindful not to upset nature's balance. Leaves, grass clippings and pet waste should never be dumped in or even next to a creek, ditch or pond.

Yard waste (grass clippings, leaves, pet droppings, etc.) is the 2nd largest category of all discarded trash. When these materials are put into the stream, they begin to decompose and use up the critical, life-giving oxygen in the water. As a result these streams can become unsightly and release a foul odor. Yard waste can also 'super-fertilize' streams and lakes and can lead to algae blooms and fish kills. Furthermore, this excess debris can obstruct flow and clog downstream culverts, leading to localized flooding and erosion problems.

Yard waste should be composted, or set out with the trash according to your community's yard waste pick-up guidelines. Pet waste should always be bagged and placed in the trash. You can further protect our local waterways by leaving an unmowed buffer strip next to any creek on your property and by planting trees and shrubs on and next to stream banks. This streamside setback helps to filter pollutants from runoff and to protect the streambank from erosion.

You can learn more by calling Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District (216-524-6580) and requesting a free copy of *Life at the Water's Edge: Living in Harmony with Your Backyard Stream*. Remember – Clean water starts with you!

To learn more ►►►

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