

Life at the Water's Edge

five in a series of six fact sheets on stream management

Don't Dump!

Cuyahoga SWCD, Natural Resources Conservation Service



We all know that it is not acceptable to dump tires, machine parts, plastics and other unnatural trash into our waterways. But many still believe it's okay to put "organic" yard waste like grass and leaves onto a streambank, in a storm drain, or into a ditch.

Well, when it comes to dumping, even organic yard waste doesn't "cut it." When yard waste (grass, leaves, pet waste, etc.) is deposited in the stream it upsets the natural balance.

Yard waste from our maintained landscapes should never be dumped or piled in and around waterways or storm drains. Yard waste should be composted or set out with the trash according to your community's yard waste pick-up guidelines.

Yard waste:

- ◆ is the 2nd largest category of all discarded trash.
- ◆ decomposes and uses up the oxygen in streams, makes streams smell bad, and it looks unsightly.
- ◆ nutrients can lead to algae blooms and fish kills.
- ◆ can obstruct flow and clog downstream culverts, leading to localized flooding and erosion problems.
- ◆ piled on streambanks can choke out plants that serve to stabilize and prevent erosion.

With more than 30 million acres of lawn in the United States, stream-smart lawn maintenance DOES make a difference!

Simple Solutions:

Mowing? "Cut it high, and let it lie."

Grass is its own best natural fertilizer. Composed of 90% water, clippings break down quickly. Grass clippings contain valuable nutrients that can generate up to 25 percent of your lawns total fertilizer needs. Use a mulching mower to most efficiently break down your grass clippings. Leave a "no mow" zone near the stream.

Fertilizing? Do it sensibly. Many people use too much fertilizer. When it rains, excess fertilizers run off the lawn and pavement, into storm drains, and into streams. Once there, fertilizers pollute the water by encouraging too much algae growth. When the algae die, the oxygen levels often decrease too much to support fish and insect populations. Also, don't forget to sweep fertilizers off the pavement.

Not Composting? Get Started! Composting is nature's way of turning leaves, grass clippings and vegetable scraps into a soil conditioner. It's easy and can be a relatively quick process. To find out more about composting techniques, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District or local Ohio State University Extension office. Just remember not to compost near the stream!

Man's Best Friend sharing your yard? Dog's can't pick up after themselves, so you have to! Plastic waste bags take up space in a landfill, consider biodegradable bags instead. Beyond that you can flush your pups waste. You can dig a hole at least one foot deep to bury it (being sure to avoid groundwater sources). There are also dog waste digester systems.

Don't Change the path of your stream

Purposefully using concrete or rocks to build artificial walls to "shore up" the banks often leads to *problems, not solutions*. If not designed and installed properly, these structures not only damage the land and stream, they can be *dangerous* for you, your family and downstream landowners.



Haphazardly dumping concrete and rocks in your stream ACCELERATES STREAMBANK EROSION.

Simple Solutions:

- ◆ Leave a vegetated riparian zone along your stream. This is your greatest defense against upstream changes in the watershed.
- ◆ If possible, let nature take its course. Remember streams meander for a reason.
- ◆ Consult your community engineer or local Soil and Water Conservation District before addressing stream issues.

Why culverting your stream is not the answer...

Confining a stream in a pipe underground eliminates not only the stream but its floodplain as well. Downstream erosion and flooding are accelerated, and, groundwater, essential for stream flow during the hot summer months, becomes disconnected from the stream.

Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Soil & Water Conservation

Mailer printed with generous support of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District through its Watershed Grants Program.

More Information: at:
cuyahogawcd.org
Click on "What We Do" and
"Watershed Management"



Backyard

Habitat

Improvement

Ideas



Kelly Parker, Cuyahoga SWCD

Water and Wildlife

Get a toad or two! Toads are great insect-eaters consuming three times their weight in garden pests each day.

To attract them, just place a flowerpot upside down, with one corner propped up so they can get underneath.

A fresh water source is also critical. Consider installing a small pond or birdbath at ground level for toads and other amphibians.

Your Backyard Stream

Unlike your furnace or dishwasher, you probably didn't get an Owner's Manual for the stream on your property. Filled with general operating instructions and fixes for common problems, owner's manuals provide the operating instructions we need to keep our household appliances in good working order. But what about our streams? How do we know how to keep them functioning properly and healthy?

Cuyahoga SWCD has a presentation for you. Available now for viewing online.

cuyahogawcd.org

Click on "Programs"

"Presentations and Speakers Bureau"

"Your Backyard Stream: An Owner's Manual"

Acting today to maintain the Watershed

www.cuyahogawcd.org

Phone: 216.524.6580

Cleveland, Ohio 44114

3311 Perkins Avenue, Suite 100



Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Cleveland, OH
Permit No.
3666

Life at the Water's Edge
Don't Dump!

five in a series of six fact sheets on stream management