

**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE**

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# Stormwater

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Agriculture and Natural Resources • Family and Consumer Sciences • 4-H Youth Development • Community and Economic Development

# What is stormwater?



**W**hen rain or snowmelt flows over surfaces such as rooftops, sidewalks, or driveways, it is called stormwater.

As stormwater moves across lawns and paved areas, it picks up bacteria, nutrients, sediments, heavy metals, and chemicals before traveling through the storm sewers to our water bodies. Because the stormwater is not cleaned or treated, it creates harmful conditions for the environment and for us.

# What harm can stormwater cause?

- **Trash in water bodies** can kill or disable birds, turtles, and fish.
- **Too many nutrients** in a water body promote algae growth. Too much algae lowers the oxygen level of the water. Fish and other water organisms need oxygen to live.
- **Pollution** from stormwater increases the risk of contaminated drinking water.
- **Contamination** increases water treatment costs.



# How can you reduce stormwater pollution?

- **Don't** litter.
- **Compost** yard waste.
- **Never sweep contaminants** into the street or storm drain.
- **Choose hardy plants** that require little water.
- **Use** fertilizers and pesticides sparingly.
- **Cover bare soil** with straw or mulch to prevent soil erosion.
- **Use wood, brick, or gravel** for patios and walkways so water can soak in rather than running off.
- **Pick up** after your pet.
- **Maintain** your septic system by having it serviced every three to five years.
- **Walk, bike, or carpool** so fewer pollutants are released into the air.





- **Install a rain garden** to capture and reduce run-off.
- **Use a rain barrel** to capture run-off from rooftops.
- **Dispose of** solid and hazardous wastes properly.
- **Recycle** items such as paint, electronics, and batteries.
- **Visit** <http://www.earth911.com/recycling/> to learn how to recycle in your area.
- **Contact** your county solid waste coordinator or cooperative extension agent for information.



Adapted from *Reducing Stormwater Pollution (AEN-106)*.

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