

Life at the Water's Edge

Don't Dump!

five in a series of six fact sheets on stream management



CUYAHOGA SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

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 OK to deposit "organic" material like leaves and grass onto a stream bank or into the stream itself. Many even think it's helpful in the erosion battle.

Well, when it comes to stream dumping, even organic doesn't "cut it". When yard waste (grass, leaves, pet waste, etc.) is deposited in the stream, it begins to rob the water of critical, life-giving oxygen. As a result, fish kills can occur while the stream becomes unsightly and foul smelling. Dumping yard waste or other materials near your stream also fills in the valuable floodplain area that stores and treats excess water.

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 lawn's 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!

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.



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION

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, Soil and Water Conservation District, or Chagrin River Watershed Partners 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.



Backyard

Habitat

Improvement

Ideas



DOHR

Water and Wildlife

A fresh water source is critical to wildlife. Consider installing a small pond or birdbath to provide essential habitat for birds, insects and amphibians.



DOHR

Get a toad or two! Toads are great insect-eaters

consuming three times their weight in garden pests each day. Prey includes slugs (a favorite!), beetles, cutworms, flies, grasshoppers, gypsy moths, sow bugs, pill bugs, centipedes, millipedes, mole crickets, and ants. They won't harm your flowers or vegetables, either. To attract them, just place a flowerpot upside down, with one corner propped up so they can get underneath. Don't forget to provide a water source such as a saucer, bird bath at ground level, or a small pond.

Acting today to maintain the Chagrin River Watershed



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