

Is Your Business Going Green?

Fact Sheet

WATER POLLUTION

Sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced in recent years. Now, more than 60% of water pollution comes from things like runoff from homes and small businesses. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. So, believe it or not, the biggest source of water pollution today is not industry – it is actually households and small businesses like yours. But each of us can do little things to help clean up our water. And it starts with realizing that ***our sewers and storm systems are separate – what goes into storm drains flows directly into the environment, untreated.***



WHAT RUNS OFF YOUR BUSINESS?

Dumpster areas are the # 1 source of polluted runoff for small businesses. Waste placed in these dumpsters can find their way into storm drains and eventually into our environment. Not only can poor housekeeping around your dumpster area be unsightly to potential customers, it can also be harmful to our environment. Another costly and potentially harmful practice is over fertilizing of lawn areas. Fertilizer that is over applied or misapplied is washed into our storm drains and local waterways causing algal blooms and fish kills. Fertilizer is a recurring expense that adds up over time, and its use could be reduced significantly with “green” landscaping practices. Other benefits of using “green” landscaping practices and less fertilizer is that your company will be using less water to irrigate and spending less on mowing.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- During the summer months it is estimated that nearly 40% of household and small business water is used for lawn and landscape maintenance.
- Phosphorus (the middle number on the fertilizer bag) is “junk food” for algae. One pound of phosphorus can produce 10,000 pounds of wet weeds and algae.
- Water utilities in the Midwest spend \$400 million each year to treat water for the chemical pesticide Atrazine

WHAT YOU CAN DO

How can you have a beautiful business and help keep our waters clean?

1. **Dumpsters** – Dumpsters – Keep lids closed, dispose of liquid waste properly, and cleanup debris around dumpster areas.
2. **Fertilizing** –Have your landscape company use fertilizer containing low or no phosphorous. Use dry clean-up methods for over spray (sweep with a broom rather than spray with a hose), which prevents excess fertilizer from entering storm drains.



City of Noblesville
**Clean
Storm
Water
Program**



City of Noblesville Utilities



For more information on keeping our water clean, contact the City of Noblesville Clean Storm Water Program at 317.776.6353

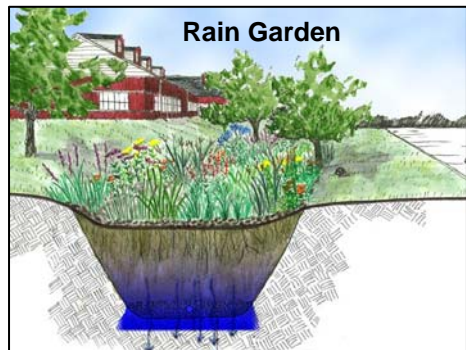
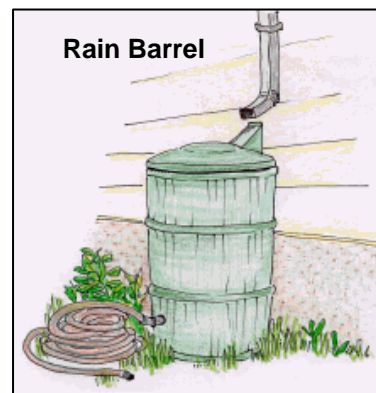
www.cityofnoblesville.org/cleanwater

3. **Impervious Surfaces** – Impervious surfaces prevent rainwater from soaking into the ground, causing runoff to pick up pollutants as it flows toward our waterways. So reduce the amount of impervious surfaces around your business. Alternatives such as paving blocks, gravel, cobbles, brick, and natural stone can replace asphalt and concrete in driveways, parking lots, and walkways.

4. **Native Plants** – Add native plants to your landscape. They are low-maintenance, drought tolerant, and require no fertilizers or extra watering, thus conserving water and preventing unnecessary pollution. Go to www.prairienursery.com to find an ideal seed mix for your area.

5. **Mulch** – Mulch circles beneath trees and around plant beds.

6. **Rain Barrel** – Install a rain barrel or rain harvesting system. A rain barrel or harvesting system is a method that collects and stores rainwater from your roof that would otherwise run off and be diverted to the storm system. Using a rain harvesting system reduces runoff, conserves water, provides irrigation water during watering restrictions, and helps lower your water bill. You can buy prepackaged rain harvesting systems. Or go to our [How-To Sheet](#) at www.cityofnoblesville.org/cleanwater for instructions on how to make one from scratch.



7. **Rain Garden** – Install a rain garden to capture runoff. Rain gardens typically absorb much more water than the same size area of lawn. They are drought-resistant, winter hardy, and less prone to destructive insects and diseases. Rain gardens create preferred habitats for birds, butterflies, and dragonflies. These specialty gardens are versatile. In addition to their aesthetic beauty, they help filter runoff, prevent flooding, and enhance groundwater recharge. Go to www.raingardens.org for instructions on how to build your own or contact the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District for customized assistance.

8. **Additional Ideas**

- Direct downspouts away from paved surfaces. This allows runoff to soak into the lawn rather than running along the curb and picking up pollutants
- Have your soil tested. A soil test is an inexpensive and informative way to determine the quality of your soil. The laboratory will test soil pH, nutrient content, and percentage of organic matter, so you can determine exactly what nutrients your lawn needs, and prevent unnecessary excess use of fertilizer.
- When building new or remodeling, think LID (Low Impact Development)
- Contact a professional consultant or local government resources for ideas on conserving and protecting our storm water

When you apply these principles, it is a **Win-Win**. You end up with an attractive business that doesn't waste water, fertilizers, or pesticides, saving both time and money. At the same time, our area streams, rivers, and lakes as well as our wildlife are protected for generations to come.

