

HOME IMPROVEMENT

What a rewarding feeling it is to complete your own home improvement project! But did you know certain practices could contribute to water quality problems in Michigan's lakes and streams if special care isn't taken? Rainwater washes wastes from roads, driveways, and yards into the nearest body of water or storm drain. Unlike the wastewater in your home which is cleaned at a wastewater treatment plant, anything that goes into a storm drain is routed directly into lakes and stream - untreated!

CONCRETE, MASONRY, AND TILE WORK

- Don't use your hose as a broom! Never wash excess material from bricklaying or patio/driveway construction into a storm drain. Also, don't hose down driveways, sidewalks, or streets into storm drains.
- Make clean-up simple - Set up and operate small mixers on heavy tarps or drop cloths.
- Recycle - Collect and reuse excess sand and gravel.
- Reduce runoff - Surfaces such as concrete and roofed areas increase the volume and velocity with which rainwater travels to streams, and they don't provide an opportunity for the water to infiltrate into the ground – a process which naturally filters out pollutants collected by rainwater. Try using alternatives like gravel, bricks, and flagstones which allow some water to filtrate down into the earth. If you must use these materials, try to minimize their effects by sloping such surfaces toward vegetated areas.
- Watch the weather - Apply driveway sealant when rain is not forecast. Cover bags of cement and mortar after opening to keep wind-blown dust away from gutters and storm drains.

LANDSCAPING

Many landscaping projects have the potential for exposing soils and adding chemicals to your lawn and garden. When fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides are not applied correctly, storm water will wash the excess away into nearby lakes, streams, and storm drains. Here's how you can prevent erosion and reduce the impact of your lawn and garden on water resources:

- Compost: the miracle drug for your yard - Compost is a natural slow-release fertilizer. Also, it retains water when added to sandy soils and improves drainage when added to clay soils.
- Debug - Remove pest-infested plants in the fall. Remove insect eggs, larvae, cocoons, and adults from plants by hand.
- Landscape with hardy plants - Choose disease- and pest- resistant plant varieties appropriate for your soil and climate.
- Let your clippings lay - Cut grass is a natural mulch for your lawn. A mulching mower will cut blades into tiny pieces, allowing them to decompose easier.

- Mulch it - Cover exposed soil in the garden with 2-3 inches of mulch to prevent weeds from surfacing. Don't forget, pulling weeds is a great alternative to spraying with chemicals!
- Test your soil - If you think a fertilizer is necessary, test your soil first. A soil test will tell you how much nutrients your lawn or garden have so that you will not over-apply.
- Watch the weather - Schedule grading projects for dry weather and replant as soon as possible. If there is a lag between the grading and the final planting, a temporary vegetation may be necessary. Try an annual grass seed.

PAINTING

- Dispose properly - The following are considered hazardous waste and should be taken to a household hazardous waste site:
 - Empty aerosol cans
 - Excess paint
 - Lead paint chips
 - Chemical paint stripping residue, including saturated rags
 - Solvents
 - Thinners
- Keep track of paint age - Don't use paints over 15 years old because they may contain toxic levels of lead.
- Only buy what you need, otherwise, save unused paint or donate it to an organization.
- Use latex paint - Choose water-based paints over oil-based paints. They're less toxic.
- Recycle - Reuse paint thinner or cleaning solvents. Set aside in a closed jar to settle-out paint particles, then pour off clear liquid for future use. Be sure you label the jar, so you don't forget what is inside!