

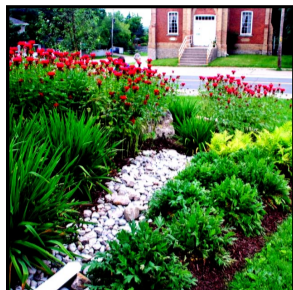


JEFFCO H₂O NEWS

ISSUE 31 - SPRING/SUMMER 2020

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Start With a Plan



You've probably heard the phrase: Plan your work and work your plan. That is great advice in many situations, and for managing stormwater on your property, that phrase certainly holds true. Every change that we make to our home landscape, be it adding a garden, creating an off-street parking area, or installing a deck, has the potential to change the way in which stormwater soaks into or runs off from our property. A small scale project may not create a significant change, but a larger project can increase runoff and potentially cause flooding. Adding impervious areas such as a new garage, home addition, or patio immediately reduces the potential for rain to soak into the ground. This means that more rainwater runs off more quickly from these hard surfaces. This increase in volume and velocity of rainwater leaving your property contributes to the amount of runoff entering the storm drainage system and eventually local creeks and streams. This runoff picks up and carries whatever is on the ground into waterways. The good news is that there are ways to offset the increase in runoff by adding some stormwater management practices to your landscape. Creating natural areas and rain gardens in your landscape are

easy and effective practices to reduce runoff. These areas help slow the water down, and either spread the water out or hold it back, both of which allow the rainwater ample time to soak into the ground. This [Homeowners Guide](#) has helpful information and ideas to get you started.

What's Happening

The Survey Says - Four minutes, two surveys, one big thank you! Please take four minutes to [make a difference](#) in keeping our rivers, lakes and streams clean and beautiful. Your responses are anonymous and will be used to improve our stormwater education program.

Navigating Uncertainties - For all events listed below, be sure to visit [jccal.org](#) or the organization's website to get the latest information and to determine if any event is being cancelled or postponed. Please note that the Household Hazardous Waste collection events scheduled for three locations on Saturday April 25 have been postponed, with plans to reschedule during the summer.

Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Series - Birmingham Botanical Gardens - This free, informative seminar [series](#) is currently postponed until May 20, but check [here](#) for updates or to verify the schedule.

Alabama Extension Online Series - Enjoy [Urban Green Back 2 Basics](#) and [Smart Yards Online](#) that are free classes presented via Zoom.

Electronic Collection Event - June 13 - Center Point Courthouse - Did you know that recycling cell phones and other hand held devices can help save the [wild gorilla](#) population? Bring all your unwanted electronics to this FREE [event](#) to properly dispose and recycle their usable components.

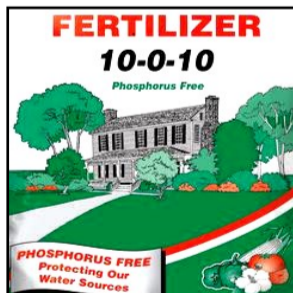
Rain Barrel Workshop - June 20 - Birmingham Botanical Gardens - Build and bring home a rain barrel to collect, store, and use rainwater as needed! Preregistration is required. For more information, click [HERE](#).

The Intrepid Gardener



Gardening has some obvious benefits. For starters, it usually means that you will have a great looking yard. For people who also decide to plant edible crops in their landscape, their efforts bring lots of fresh yummy vegetables to enjoy both during and after the growing season which saves time, money and trips to the grocery store. Imagine not paying extra for organically grown produce because you grew it yourself! There also are some not so obvious benefits that gardening can bring. Studies show that outdoor activities can boost your mood and improve your general well-being. And for those of us who hate to exercise, gardening is an activity that definitely burns calories and can help improve your fitness level. Gardening is also an activity that can be social, with many garden clubs and societies that share plants, provide helpful information, and assist in problem solving when things don't go exactly as planned. Our own Wayne Trammell, AKA Mr. T, has been hard at work in his home garden putting in place the preparations for a bountiful crop of veggies. Like all of us, Mr. T has had some successes as well as a few 'learning opportunities'. [Let's see](#) what he's been doing!

Be P Free



That number in the middle can make all the difference in water quality in Jefferson County. I'm talking about the middle number on the fertilizer bag - the amount of phosphorous or **P** in the formulation. Historically, those 3 numbers on the fertilizer bag were what consumers looked for when they purchased a 'balanced' fertilizer for their yard rather than first doing a soil test to identify what nutrients the plants actually needed to thrive. While it's true that turf grass and other plants need phosphorous to support photosynthesis, our soil in Alabama already has more than sufficient phosphorous to meet that need. Since our soil does not need more of this nutrient, any extra phosphorous that is added to home landscapes and agricultural sites through fertilizing is not absorbed by plants and remains in the soil. The excess phosphorous is washed off these sites by stormwater which carries it to streams, rivers, lakes and oceans. Excess phosphorous in water bodies creates algae blooms that are toxic to humans, fish and animals. These algae blooms also deplete oxygen concentrations in water to the point that it cannot support aquatic life. This condition is called [hypoxia](#). The [EPA](#) reports that Alabama currently has ten

hypoxic ecosystems. Many states now have regulations limiting products such as fertilizers and detergent which contain phosphorous or phosphates in order to reduce this problem. Next time you plan to apply fertilizer to your landscape, first test your soil. Once you know exactly what your soil needs, purchase a formulation which only contains nutrients that your landscape is lacking. And please make sure that your purchase is **P** Free!

Targeting Pests



Managing pests in your landscape, from insects to plants, is a task that deserves some research and planning. Many pesticides are broad spectrum formulations, meaning that they will kill all insects or plants, not just the ones you would like to eliminate. While that will achieve what you want, is that actually what you need? In most cases, it is safer for your family and the environment to take a conservative approach to dealing with pests. Integrated Pest Management or [IPM](#) is a science based approach which focuses on [pest prevention](#). IPM takes into consideration what you have growing in your landscape, the conditions in your landscape (sunlight, water, etc.), and how you use the landscape. Identifying the pest is the first step in successfully solving the problem. The Alabama Extension's [Plant Diagnostic Lab](#) can help you identify the pest in your landscape (disease, bug or plant) and offer some suggestions to resolve it. In some cases, the pests may be creating minimal damage and a little tolerance may be the best course of action. If the annoyance or damage reaches a point where you feel it really must be addressed, then choosing a treatment specific to the pest or trying a [natural remedy](#) is the safest choice.

Ridding your landscape of invasive plants is an example where more [direct action](#) should be taken, since invasives can create many problems. Preventing pests in the first place is always the best course of action. That can be accomplished by installing pest resistant varieties of grass, plants, shrubs and trees well suited to the soil, sunlight and climate in your landscape. Pay attention to choosing the healthiest plants to purchase. Be sure to provide adequate organic matter and water, and hand weed or spot treat weeds when necessary to stay ahead of a potential problem. Install flowering plants that encourage beneficial insects to visit your landscape. Many beneficial insects feed on the harmful or undesirable insects that may be living in your landscape. Over time, utilizing IPM techniques can reduce the amount of time, cost and effort you invest in controlling pests.