

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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Absorbing the Storm

Simple Actions for Managing Stormwater in Your Own Back Yard

Spring is already here! The snow blower and lawn mower have traded parking spots in the garage and the tulips are up and enjoying the sunshine. As you begin planning outdoor projects around your home, now is a great time to incorporate small changes to better manage stormwater in your own back yard.

That's right, you have stormwater in your own yard. Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow that does not soak into the ground. Your roof, driveway, and other hard surfaces like decks and patios all contribute to stormwater runoff, which can overwhelm small streams and become polluted with trash and debris, vehicle fluids, pesticides and fertilizers, pet waste, sediment, and other pollutants when it flows over impervious surfaces, lawns, and other developed areas.

Many actions on your property that seem harmless actually create excess stormwater runoff and can pollute nearby surface waters - like hosing down your driveway instead of sweeping it or applying an entire bag of fertilizer on your lawn instead of only the amount that it needs. Simple changes to the way you manage your property can protect the lakes and rivers that we play in and depend on.

How do we manage stormwater?

Historically, conventional stormwater management focused on flood control. Ditches and pipes were used to move water away from a property as quickly as possible and direct it to nearby surface waters. While this was effective in preventing on-site flooding, it was devastating to downstream lakes and rivers and often resulted in severe flooding, stream bank erosion, and water pollution. In fact, stormwater pollution contributes to over 80 percent of the polluted waters in New Hampshire.

Today, in order to restore our polluted lakes and streams and to protect our healthy waters from pollution, we have begun to focus on new strategies to manage stormwater. By mimicking the way water naturally flows over and through the ground we can reduce water pollution from developed areas. Instead of piping water away from a property as quickly as possible, strategies now manage and treat stormwater on site, as close to its source as possible.

What can I do?

Whether your house is new or old, on a small lot or a big one, in the city, the country, or anywhere in between, there are ways to manage stormwater on your property. The biggest stormwater problems around a home usually come from the roof, driveway, and lawn. Here are a few simple solutions to common stormwater problems that you might encounter on your property.

Roofs

Problems – *Without gutters* runoff drips from the edges or valleys of a roof and erodes the ground below it. *With gutters* downspouts are directed toward impervious surfaces and contribute to polluted runoff from the property or erode the soil.

Solutions - Place a splash guard on the ground where the water falls



from a roof valley or gutter downspout. Better yet, install a rain barrel to capture and reuse the water or a dry well to help it soak into the ground. Install a dripline infiltration trench along the perimeter of your foundation to prevent erosion and promote infiltration.

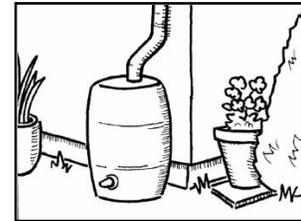


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Driveways

Problems - Driveways are typically constructed of impervious materials that create runoff and direct it to the street potentially contributing to flooding, erosion, and pollutants entering storm drains and nearby streams.

Solutions - Reduce the amount of stormwater getting onto your driveway by redirecting gutter downspouts to a vegetated area, a rain barrel, or other practice that will promote infiltration such as a dry well.



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Lawns

Problems - Excess fertilizer and other lawn chemicals wash off your lawn with stormwater entering storm drains and nearby surface waters. Channelized flow creates gullies in your lawn, causing erosion.

Solutions - Reduce the amount of lawn that you have. Convert lawn areas into low maintenance gardens with native vegetation to reduce the need to water or fertilize these areas. Use a no phosphorus and low, slow-release nitrogen fertilizer only when needed. Better yet, have your soils tested to see if they even need fertilizer at all. Apply lime to raise the pH of the soil so it is capable of using available nutrients. Do not apply fertilizer or other chemicals when rain is expected. Mow high! Set the blade height to 3 inches or higher. Slow down and spread out stormwater running over your lawn by using practices to promote infiltration.

Resources and Contact Information

For more information on the management practices suggested above and other stormwater management strategies for your home:

- *New Hampshire Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater Management Do-It-Yourself Solutions for Your Home* at <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/stormwater/stormwater-mgmt-homeowners.htm>
- EPA's *Soak Up The Rain Campaign* at <http://www.epa.gov/region1/soakuptherain/index.html>
- UNH Cooperative Extension Soil Testing at <http://extension.unh.edu/agric/agpds/soiltest.htm>
- Contact Jillian McCarthy, NHDES Stormwater Coordinator at jillian.mccarthy@des.nh.gov

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