

Recycle Used Motor Oil & Fix Leaking Vehicles

One gallon of used oil can contaminate one million gallons of water. When you change the oil in your car, collect the old oil into a clean container and take it to your local auto parts store for recycling. Don't mix other fluids with the oil to be recycled. Never pour oil down storm drains or on the ground because storm drains flow directly into nearby streams. Used oil filters can also be recycled. The oil is drained from the filter, the filter housing's metal and plastic can be salvaged and recycled, and the oil-soaked paper filter can be used as fuel in some industrial facilities. Leaks from vehicles account for a large portion of oil that ends up in water bodies. Fix leaks as soon as possible to reduce both pollution and oil use and use drip pans when changing oil to prevent spills.

Use Reusable Bags

Reusable bags help reduce the amount of plastic bags that end up in landfills or water bodies. Each year, 100 billion plastic shopping bags are used in the United States. Wildlife often mistake plastic as food and ingest it, which often leads to intestinal blockage, starvation and death. Plastic never goes away. It photodegrades, which means that it only breaks down into smaller pieces, and these pieces are still harmful to the environment and wildlife. Reusable bags are available at most stores (for a small price) in materials ranging from recycled polypropylene to canvas. Better yet, make your own reusable bag by recycling old clothes, sheets or curtains if they can't be given to a shelter or charity. Several websites provide free patterns and instructions on how to make your own bag. (Google: "Reusable Bag Pattern").



Collect & Use Rainwater

Rainwater can easily be collected into containers to be used for watering lawns and gardens. Many cities offer "make-and-take" classes on how to make rain barrels from easily found materials. Recycled 55-gallon food-grade barrels can be purchased for as little as \$15 at local livestock feed stores. Additional materials such as spigots and hoses can be found at any hardware store. Container openings should be covered with screens to keep mosquitoes, children and wildlife from accessing the water. If a community of 6,000 homes each collected two barrels of rainwater a year, that water would fill up an Olympic-sized swimming pool. That's more than 660,000 gallons of water that would not run off from yards and carry pollutants to water bodies. It also reduces demand on public water supply systems.

Properly Dispose of Pet Waste

About 20 percent of water pollution from fecal matter comes from dogs. Nitrogen in their waste can lead to algal blooms, and the bacteria and parasites in pet waste can be harmful to humans. Always pick up pet waste from your yard and when you take your pet for walks. Reuse plastic grocery bags or new paper bags for this purpose. Pet supply stores sell plastic waste bags and bag dispensers that can be attached to leashes to keep them handy during walks. The waste can be placed in the trash; flushed down the toilet; buried at least 5 inches deep in the yard, away from play areas, gardens and water bodies; or placed in pet waste digesters, available at many pet supply stores.



10 SIMPLE WAYS YOU CAN PREVENT WATER POLLUTION

Trinity River Authority | Clean Rivers Program

"We forget that the water cycle and the life cycle are one."

- Jacques Cousteau

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Prepared in cooperation with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, The preparation of this brochure was financed in part through funding from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Hand Water or Use Soaker Hoses Instead of Sprinklers

When watering your garden or lawn, use a soaker hose or hand water instead of using a sprinkler. Sprinklers can waste water if they spray onto sidewalks, streets or driveways. Soaker hoses can be placed only where water is needed, such as around plant bases to deliver water directly to the soil around their roots. You can also hand water with a watering can (especially if you collect rainwater) or with a water hose and fan sprayer attachment. Hand watering ensures that water only goes where it's needed and helps prevent overwatering, which can lead to runoff from your yard.

Don't Sweep Grass Clippings Into Streets

When edging and mowing your lawn, do not allow grass clippings to remain in the street; they may get washed into nearby storm drains and water bodies. Most cities have ordinances against placing clippings and other yard waste into storm drains. Grass clippings have a high nitrogen and phosphorous content, which can lead to algal blooms. In addition, the bacteria that degrade grass clippings and other organic matter use oxygen in the decay process. Excessive amounts of decaying organic litter can lead to low dissolved oxygen as well as fish kills. Clippings should be swept back into your yard or composted. Some cities have community composting facilities. If your city doesn't have one, try composting at home. Grass clippings, dead leaves and vegetable scraps from your kitchen produce compost that can be used in gardens and potted plants and on lawns.

"A river is more than an amenity, it is a treasure."

-Supreme Court Justice
Oliver Wendell Holmes



Recycle Compact Fluorescent Lights

Used CFLs can be recycled at all Home Depot or Lowes locations. CFLs contain approximately four milligrams of mercury; however, they reduce the amount of mercury released into the atmosphere by coal-burning electricity plants because they use much less electricity than a standard incandescent bulb. It only takes 0.5 grams of mercury to contaminate 5 million gallons of water; that's the amount of mercury in about 125 CFLs. Mercury from these bulbs can reach water bodies from leaks at landfills and torn trash bags on your curb.

Don't Overuse Fertilizers & Pesticides

Follow application instructions carefully, and don't use when a heavy rain is expected. Excess fertilizer and pesticide leads to algal blooms and poisoning of aquatic life, so test your soil before applying fertilizer to determine if it is needed. There are also many organic alternatives to chemical fertilizers and pesticides that can help reduce water body contamination. Grass clippings are an excellent source of nitrogen and phosphorus for your yard and garden and dried or liquid molasses added to the soil encourages growth of beneficial microbes that can help make and keep your lawn and garden healthy. For an effective general herbicide, use 10 percent vinegar. Boiling water, orange oil and diatomaceous earth, just to name a few, are safe alternatives for killing fire ants and controlling many other types of insects.

Wash Cars on Your Lawn Using Non-Toxic Soap

If you wash your car at home, avoid washing it in the driveway. Water, soap and dirt from your car all runs to the nearest storm drain and water body. Instead, wash your car on the lawn so that the water soaks into the ground rather than running off into the street. The soap used to wash cars can be toxic to aquatic life, but there are several non-toxic and biodegradable alternatives. Ecover and Simple Green both make a car wash detergent and you can also make your own biodegradable car wash concentrate by mixing one cup of mild liquid dishwashing soap and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup powdered laundry detergent with three gallons of water. You can mix this concentrate with a bucket of water. Brands such as Seventh Generation, Method and Ecover, which also make biodegradable dish soap and laundry detergent, are readily available at many local stores.



Dispose of Expired Medications According to Federal Guidelines

Some medications can enter water bodies through improper disposal. The effects of this can range from bacterial resistance to antibiotics to the feminization of aquatic species. Many communities offer drug take-back programs and periodic household hazardous waste collection events where you can take your expired and unused medication for proper disposal. If these are not available in your community, remove the medication from the containers and mix with cat litter, coffee grounds or a similar material in a disposable container, such as a plastic bag or a plastic tub, and put it into the trash. Never flush unused medications down the toilet or pour them down the drain.