

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Before we all know it Spring and Summer will again be here. With the warming seasons just around the corner people will be maintaining their vehicles, washing their vehicles, cutting their lawn, fertilizing their lawn, planting or re-planting bushes, trees, shrubs, and flowers. What do all these have in common, the affect they have on our local waterways.

Let's take a look at vehicle maintenance. When changing the oil in your car, not everyone takes the vehicle to a Jiffy Lube or a garage. There are people who do it themselves. If you are one of those individuals, proper care should be taken when disposing of the used motor oil. Disposing of the used oil in tight fitting containers should be used. Also, when draining the oil from the car, proper care should be taken to catch oil spills either by using drain mats or ground cloths. Montgomery County Waste Authority provides Household Hazardous drop off sites 4 times a year. The disposal of used oil is an item that can be drop-off during those times. For more information, please call the Montgomery County Recycling Hot Line at 610-278-3618

Let's take a look at lawn care. When you are fertilizing the lawn, remember you are not just fertilizing the lawn. When you fertilize your lawn, keep in mind the affect the use of these pesticides and herbicides have on the waterways. During rain events the pesticides and herbicides get washed along the curb line and into the storm sewers. Eventually the run off water reaches the Perkiomen Creek. One alternative to using fertilizers may be the use of a mulching lawn mower. When maintaining your lawn, mow the lawn at a minimum height of three inches. A healthy lawn tolerates hot dry weather better so you will not have to spend the summer watering and fertilizing. Another alternative may be to investigate the use of organic fertilizers. So keep in mind when fertilizing your lawn; less is better than more.

Let's take a look at vehicle washing. When you are washing your car in the driveway, remember you are not just washing your car in the driveway. Although some of you take your car to a commercial car wash, there are still others who wash their car in their driveway. There are organizations such as sports teams and boy/girl scouts that use car washes as fund raisers. The problem is the dirty wash water that runs down the driveway or parking lot and makes its way into the storm sewer which eventually reaches the Perkiomen Creek. Although it may not seem like it, the dirty wash water contains oils and grease, phosphates from the soap and heavy metals that get into storm sewers. The best solution is to wash your car at a commercial car wash. When you do not, please consider the following: (a) wash your car on gravel or grass – this way the dirty water will seep into the ground; (b) try to use non-phosphate detergents as the phosphates are nutrients that can affect the quality of the water; (c) use a hose with an automatic shut-off so that the water is not constantly washing down the driveway or parking lot; (d) when your done do not dump the dirty soapy water down the driveway, drop it down a utility sink.

Let's take a look at the planting of trees, bushes, shrubs, and flowers. Trees, shrubs, and plantings are an excellent filter to help filter the storm water as it runs from your property into the storm boxes. Rain gardens are becoming an excellent tool in soaking up rain water from downspouts or over the ground. The use of a rain garden allows storm water to seep into the ground versus flowing from your gutters, to your yard or driveway to the storm boxes in the street. In constructing a rain garden, the use of plantings that are native to the area are best since they require less maintenance. Information on the construction of rain gardens can be found by linking onto Montgomery County Conservation District's web site – Rain Barrel Program. That web site is www.montgomeryconservation.org or www.raingardens.org



Have a safe and happy Spring and Summer Season

