

Site Visit Recommendations

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- Alter your yard care regime
- Disconnect your downspout
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Image courtesy of: www.greendrop.com

Alter your yard care regime

Sometimes all it takes for cleaner water is a healthier lawn. There are a few quick and easy things you can change in your lawn care practices to save you time and money, while protecting your water resources.

Mow high: The roots of your lawn grow as deep as the grass grows tall, so taller grass has deeper, healthier roots. Keep your lawn three inches or higher, and never cut off more than 1/3 of the blade each time you mow. Leave the clippings right on your

lawn for a natural fertilizer rich in nutrients and organic matter.

Water sparingly: Over-watering can damage plants, stimulate fungus, and leach nutrients out of the soil.

Create a smaller lawn area: Use trees, shrubs and flowers to landscape the rest of your yard.

Mulch grass clippings and leaves back into the lawn: Clippings that are mulched and returned to the lawn all season can contribute up to 25 percent of a lawn's seasonal fertilizer needs. The additional organic matter in the soil will also help it retain moisture. Mulching is also a terrific option for fall leaves.

If you fertilize: Check out HRWC's tips on getting your soils tested and using less fertilizer at <http://www.hrwc.org/take-action/water-pollution/fertilizers/>

Resources

- To learn more about growing a healthy lawn and managing pet waste visit: <http://www.hrwc.org/take-action/water-pollution/>

Disconnect your downspout



Image courtesy of mmsd.com

When there is rain fall, water is directed from your roof, through your rain spout into the local sewer system. During heavy storms, these sewer systems can become overwhelmed leading to basement backups and sewer overflows.

Re-directing your downspout onto your lawn or into your garden will point water towards natural spaces that can slow the flow, filter out pollutants, and alleviate pressure on the sewer system. Be sure to carefully inspect and work with the direction of the grading on your property to avoid basement seepage and lot-to-lot drainage problems. You want to keep the water away from your home's foundation!

Depending on the tools you have available, this may cost about \$15 to \$30 in materials, services extra.

Resources

- For a materials list and a step-by-step guide on how to Do It Yourself (DIY):
www.mmsd.com/downspout-disconnection
- To find a handyman in the Ann Arbor area, try the sites below. Be sure to ask whether they've done this type of work before:
 - www.Angieslist.com
 - www.homeadvisor.com/c.Handyman-Services.Ann_Arbor.MI.-12039.html
- To learn more about the flow of stormwater:
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/ess-nps-savvy-do-your-downspouts_209412_7.pdf

Install a rain barrel



Rain barrels take the downspout disconnect one step further by collecting the rain water that drains off of your roof top. This water can then be used to water your garden and lawn. For every one inch of rain that falls on a catchment area (roof) of 1,000 square feet, you can expect to collect 600 gallons of water using a rain barrel. Watering your garden and lawn takes up 40% of your household water during the summer. Using water from your rain barrel is free!

The City of Ann Arbor offers a \$2.16 discount on your water bill every quarter-year if you install 1-5 rain barrels on your property. 35 gallons is the minimum size rain barrel for the credit.

- For more information about the benefits of native plants: <http://www.hrwc.org/take-action/capture-rain/garden-with-native-plants/>
- If you need to borrow a shovel or other gardening tools, the nonprofit Growing Hope has a tool library available to group members: <http://www.growinghope.net/node/35>

□ Build a rain garden



Rain gardens combine the use of native plants with additional soil grading work so that the shape of your land directs water into the garden. They are a beautiful landscaping feature that captures, holds and soaks in runoff from storms. They are specifically designed for areas where rain water habitually pools or to which it is deliberately channeled.

Resources

- Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission runs a rain garden program. They offer site visits and design assistance, as well as a master rain gardener class. They also have an updated list of landscape contractors who have installed rain gardens in the past: www.ewashtenaw.org/government/drain_commissioner/dc_webWaterQuality/rain-gardens
- For another list of local native landscape designers (who *might* even do the hard work of installing the garden for you) try Wild Ones' website: annarbor.wildones.org/local-designers/.
- The Huron River Watershed Council has small seed packets of native plants to get you started for free. Email adaley@hrwc.org to request a packet.
- To find native plant nurseries, the Michigan Native Plant Producers Association is a group of 10 independently owned nurseries located throughout southern Michigan that grow and sell almost 400 species of Michigan native plants, including, trees, shrubs, wildflowers, grasses, and ferns. (<http://www.mnppa.org/>)
- For information about specific native plants, the Native Plant Information Network a searchable database of 7,009 native plant species, with photos, growing information, and more; a collection of 23,518 native plant images for browsing; an "Ask Mr. Smartly Plants" service for getting answers to specific questions; and numerous "How To" articles. (<http://www.wildflower.org/plants/>)
- If you need to borrow a shovel or other gardening tools, the nonprofit Growing Hope has a tool library available to group members: <http://www.growinghope.net/node/35>

Install porous pavement



Image courtesy of mmsd.com

Standard asphalt and concrete on driveways and pathways are impermeable and cause rainwater to flow down driveways or over sidewalks and streets into the nearest storm drain then on to your local waterway. Instead, you can use permeable pavement at home for your driveway, patio or walkways.

Rain water seeps through the permeable surface of this porous pavement and then soaks into the ground where it is temporarily held in a layer of fill then infiltrated by the underlying soil. Properly installed and maintained, it often has a longer lifespan than regular concrete. Types of permeable pavement include porous asphalt, pervious concrete, permeable paver blocks, reinforced turf or reinforced gravel.

This is one of the more expensive alterations to make your home creek friendly but can range greatly by the materials and services you choose to use.

Resources

- For price estimates, and more information about porous pavement considerations, read through the University of Maryland's Permeable Pavement Fact Sheet: extension.umd.edu/sites/default/files/_docs/programs/master-gardeners/Howardcounty/Baywise/PermeablePavingHowardCountyMasterGardeners10_5_11%20Final.pdf
- If you plan to do your entire driveway, we recommend finding experienced paving contractors in the Ann Arbor area who can walk you through the design and pricing process. To read reviews of contractors, try:
 - www.angieslist.com
- If you are planning to install a smaller garden pathway or sidewalk on your own, you can find a lot of materials at larger home improvement stores like Home Depot or Lowe's

- You're doing great and there's not much more we can recommend.

Wow! Great Job! How about tell a friend about us and have them request a visit too?

Friends in the Swift Run Creek Project neighborhood can request a free site assessment by emailing Ric at rlawson@hrwc.org, or calling us at: (734) 769-5123

To learn more about how to 'slow the flow' at home, visit our Swift Run: Growing Green for Clean Streams project web page: <http://www.hrwc.org/our-work/programs/swiftrun/>