

How You Can Help...

Reduce Stormwater Runoff

Water from rain and irrigation carries fertilizers and pesticides, soil and debris off lawns and streets into neighborhood storm drains that lead to the Bay. Reducing pollution from runoff is one of the best ways you can help Tampa Bay. To reduce runoff and keep it clean:

- Use **fertilizers** sparingly. Over-fertilizing actually encourages certain insects and diseases and increases maintenance needs. When shopping for fertilizers, ask for products that contain nutrients in water-insoluble or controlled release form. These fertilizers allow plants to absorb nutrients slowly, reducing runoff.
- Don't assume that chemicals are the only answer to garden pests, or that they must be used regularly. Pruning and hand picking can be equally effective. For a general purpose spray, mix 2.5 T liquid soap with 2.5 T cooking oil in a gallon of water. Techniques such as these are part of an **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** approach designed to protect beneficial organisms and the environment. Contact your County Cooperative Extension Service for more information, and ask your lawn care professional to use IPM.
- Minimize paved surfaces outside the home. Consider using porous compounds like bricks, flagstone, sand, or gravel in the construction of driveways and patios. These absorbent materials allow water to percolate slowly into the ground, reducing runoff into neighboring streams and rivers.
- Where possible, landscape with swales (low areas) and berms (elevated areas) to catch and filter stormwater and reduce runoff.
- Position gutters and roof spouts to drain onto grass, and away from concrete, so the rainwater can soak into the ground.
- Lighten your workload. Take your car to a professional carwash where water is recycled and cleaning solutions can be better managed. If you must wash your car at home, wash it over grass using mild, biodegradable, phosphate-free soap.

Clean up after your pet. Animal waste runs off lawns and curbs and contributes to bacterial pollution of surface waters. Scoop or bag droppings and discard with trash.