Using Pesticides

Pesticides are chemicals designed to kill pests. These chemicals can be potentially damaging to our waterways and even to human health.

- Apply pesticides in accordance with the label instructions.
- Don't leave or discharge any pesticides or fertilizers in driveways, streets, or parking lots….and don't pour them down a storm drain.
- Identify the pest before applying a pesticide. There may be other, more natural options.
- Instead of chemicals, try a less toxic alternative to eliminating a pest problem like using insects! Some insects that kill pests are:
  - ⇒ Lady bugs
  - ⇒ Lacewigs
  - ⇒ Dark ground beetles
  - ⇒ Soldier beetles
- Do not pour left-over pesticides down the sink or toilet. The chemicals could disrupt the operation of wastewater treatment systems and pollute water.

All excess chemicals should be taken to the SPSA Household Hazardous Collection Facility.

Benefits of keeping a well-maintained lawn

A well-maintained lawn can work as a filter, reducing runoff from impervious areas such as streets, roofs, driveways, and parking lots.

You reduce the risk of Contaminating drinking water and help to save aquatic life.

Your recreational activities are not hindered by dirty, cloudy water.

You save money by only applying exactly what your lawn needs.

Any Questions

Department of Public Utilities/Public Works
Division of Stormwater Management

757-393-8666

Southeastern Public Service Authority

757-424-4297

Virginia Cooperative Extension Service

757-393-5197

This is a public service message brought to you by the City of Portsmouth. As regulated by federal laws, the Stormwater Management Program must include public information strategies to encourage the prevention of storm drain pollution. For more brochures or information on this issue, please contact the Department of Public Utilities/Public Works, Division of Stormwater Management at 393-8691.

Yard Care For A Clean Environment

THE CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Department of Public Utilities/Public Works
Division of Stormwater Management

Stormwater Pollution

Throughout Portsmouth and all of Hampton Roads, stormwater drainage systems are collecting rainwater during rain storms. Made up of ditches, ponds, drainage structures, and underground pipes, these drainage systems quickly channel rain water from city streets directly into waterways.

Unfortunately, on its urban voyage, rain picks up all types of pollutants and carries them to waterways. This form of pollution is **stormwater runoff pollution**, and it is a by-product of our daily lives. What we put out, the rain picks up, and runoff has become the leading cause of water pollution in our nation today. One goal of Portsmouth's Stormwater Management Program is to work toward eliminating these pollutants from entering our storm drains, thereby protecting our local water bodies.

There are many factors that contribute to the pollution of our waterways. A significant one is improper lawn care, which can cause non-point source pollutants such as fertilizers, pesticides, grass clippings, and yard waste to enter our water bodies through the storm drains. These pollutants can contaminate our drinking water, kill fish and marine life, and prevent us from enjoying water as a natural resource.

Storm drain inlets capture water from streets and parking lots.

Cause & Effect

Stormwater runoff brings fertilizers & other nutrients from area lawns into our local waterways. The result is excess algae blooms, which deplete the oxygen necessary for marine life to survive.

- Over-fertilization of lawns can cause algae blooms in our lakes and rivers, cutting off essential sunlight to underwater grasses. As algae decays, it depletes dissolved oxygen in the water and can cause fish kills.
- Improper use or overuse of pesticides can be detrimental to our water supply systems and our local waterways.
- Yard waste such as grass clippings and leaves that enter the storm drains can clog pipes and ditches, causing street flooding.
- Stormwater that enters into storm drains carries pollutants such as lawn fertilizers and pesticides directly to our rivers and bays without being filtered.

Tips

Your Soil

Have your soil tested for pH level, fertility, and composition before adding fertilzers. This will show how much you need. Call your local Virginia Cooperative Extension agent at 393-5197.

Your Lawn

- Mow your lawn to the proper height, depending on your grass type—Bermuda grass and Zoysia grass: 1 to 1.5"; Centipede grass: 2 to 2.5"; and St. Augustine grass and Fescue: 2.5 to 3". Contact your nearest Virginia Cooperative Extension agent for more information at 393-5197.
- Leave your grass clippings on the lawn after you mow. They provide a natural fertilizer for your lawn as they decompose and, despite common beliefs, will not create thatch.
- Recycle your grass clippings. Create a compost pile to make organic mulch.

Using Fertilizers

- Avoid over-fertilizing or over-watering.
- If rain or wind is in the forecast, choose to fertilize another day.
- Use recommended application rates and time intervals.
- Use slow-release granular fertilizers rather than liquids. They leach less and work longer.