



Gardens and Gutters

A Central New Yorker's Guide to Managing Stormwater Runoff

April 2022

Save the April showers for May flowers with a rain barrel!

Spring is here! And as the old saying goes, April showers bring May flowers but those showers also bring stormwater runoff. Time to reinstall your rain barrel or to install one for the first time. Some of the benefits include reduced runoff pollution, lower water bills and healthier plants from using harvested rain water instead of tap water. They can even be used to add art to your garden. Rain barrels are readily available at home improvement stores or make an easy DIY project.



Rain Barrel Tips

- Never consume harvested rain water.
- Use collected rainwater for watering plants and for washing outdoor furniture and equipment.
- Place your rain barrel on a level, supportive base.
- Use water regularly to keep water fresh and prevent overflows.
- Watch for damage or debris and clear out as necessary.
- At the end of the season empty completely and leave the spigot open to prevent freezing and cracking. Store the barrel upside down or indoors. At this time, you should also reconnect the downspout.

DIY quick guide

- Start with a clean 55 gallon food grade barrel. Clean and disinfect the inside.
- Install a hose and spigot.
- Build and place on a platform
- Create an opening in the top of the barrel to connect to a downspout. Install a mesh screen over this opening to block debris
- Use a diverter to connect to downspout

Visit [CCE Onondaga County](#) for complete instructions on how to build your own rain barrel!

What native plants can do for you

As you get excited about getting back into the garden, get equally as excited about reintroducing native plants into your landscape! With so much of our world developed there is an urgent need to make space for native plants in our landscaped and gardened areas. Native plants have a long list of benefits to water quality, biodiversity and to gardeners.

Runoff prevention. Native Plants have deeper roots than typical turf grass found in the average American yard. As a result, they have more capacity to absorb water. This prevents pooling or flooding and excessive runoff to storm drains or surface waters. Additionally, these tap roots are more effective in holding the soil together and are better able to withstand and prevent erosion.

Protecting Biodiversity. Native plants, birds, insects, and wildlife work together to create a well-balanced ecosystem. Research shows that native wildlife prefers native plants. Since most pesticides kill indiscriminately, beneficial insects become secondary targets in the fight against pests. Using native plants has the dual benefit for wildlife of providing them with habitat and eliminating your need to introduce chemicals into their habitat.

Low Maintenance. Because they adapted to the local environment, native plants are more drought tolerant than ornamental plants commonly found in American gardens. They require little or no fertilizer or pesticides to thrive because they are well adapted to local growing conditions. Overall they require fewer resources, less pruning and less of your time, while looking beautiful!

You can learn more about where to find native plant seeds and nurseries from Cornell Cooperative Extension or the Habitat Gardeners of CNY.



Blue Flag Iris:



Purple Coneflower



Joe Pye Weed and Black-eyed Susan

Spring cleaning shouldn't be toxic

With spring in the air you might find yourself tackling some projects at home like clearing out the old clutter in the basement or back of the garage. As you do it is important to dispose of all waste properly.

It is illegal to place any hazardous waste from your home out for curbside pick up. This includes unused pesticides, fertilizers, paint, oil, car fluids, chemical cleaners, detergents and outdated electronics. Curbside collection and disposal are not designed for handling these products. If they go to landfills they leach toxic material into the air, soil, and water which creates health hazards for people and wildlife. They also present safety risks to hauling staff.

It is also illegal to dump these materials and others such as unused or pharmaceuticals into a storm drain or into the natural environment. Storm drains are connected directly to surface waterways with no treatment before discharging. This is because they are only designed for rain water. Nothing else. When anything is dumped into a storm drain, it flows straight to our streams and lakes. Pollution threatens critical habitat as well as recreational and drinking water resources.

Onondaga County residents can take advantage of OCCRA's no cost hazardous waste drop off by making an appointment [online](#).

Out with the old and In with the new!

Kick toxics out of your home with these common ingredients!

Baking Soda effectively cleans, deodorizes, brightens, and cuts through grease and grime.

Washing Soda effectively removes stains from fabric and cuts grease and other stubborn stains, like coffee and tea.

Castile Soap cuts through grease and cleans with bacteria fighting properties.

Vinegar eliminates grease, soap scum, and grime.

Lemon Juice annihilates mildew and mold, cuts through grease, and shines hard surfaces.



Phosphorus and you

Phosphorus is a naturally occurring and important component of life. It is a nutrient for soils and contributes to healthy plant growth. Some phosphorus in water bodies is required but too much of it upsets the ecosystem.

Excess phosphorus in an aquatic ecosystem leads to plant and algae overgrowth. As the plants grow, their life cycle process decreases available dissolved oxygen needed by fish and other aquatic organisms to survive. This is known as eutrophication.

Oversaturation of nutrients, particularly phosphorus, is a key contributor to harmful algal blooms. Phosphorus is viewed as the “limiting nutrient” meaning that without it, harmful algae can’t really grow and thrive.

Excess phosphorus is picked up by storm runoff and can enter waterways through stormwater systems or directly into a nearby stream. While there are many interrelated factors related to land use and climate change influencing the increased instances of Harmful Algal blooms in Central NY, excess phosphorus introduced by runoff is a big one, and a factor over which we have some control.

There are many solutions for managing the amount of phosphorus in runoff ranging from major projects to small actions in your yard at home.

1. Restoring wetlands
2. Installing riparian buffers along stream corridors
3. Naturalizing yard areas
4. Skipping commercial fertilizers
5. Bagging leaves in the fall
6. Promptly pick up pet waste

NYS Nutrient Run-off Law

As of 2012 NYS prohibits use of phosphate fertilizers, with a few exceptions. The law was designed to protect our lakes. When shopping, look for the 0.



Tips to ditch your commercial fertilizers!

- Leave grass clippings on the lawn to naturally provide fertilizer
- Replace lawn area with low maintenance native plants
- Make your own compost with kitchen scraps egg shells and coffee grounds

What's in YOUR Lawn?



Lawn Contents:



- Compost.....
- Earthworms
- Ladybugs.....
- Mulched leaves & lawn clippings.....

Lawn Contents:



- 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid.....
- Pendimethalin.....
- Imidacloprid
- Glyphosate-Isopropylammonium.....
- Other lawn chemicals.....

Think about it.

For more information on how to have a beautiful, chemical free yard visit <https://www.dec.ny.gov/public/44290.html>

Only Rain Belongs in the Drain



In Onondaga County, if you see or suspect that someone has poured contaminants into a storm drain, report it to the Onondaga County Stormwater Pollution hotline at 315-435-3157.

CNY STORMWATER COALITION MEMBERS

The CNY Stormwater Coalition is made up of 29 local governments, and the NYS Fairgrounds, working together to meet regulatory requirements while improving water quality.

Baldwinsville	Manlius Village
Camillus Town	Marcellus Town
Camillus Village	Marcellus Village
Central Square	Minoa
Cicero	North Syracuse
Clay	Onondaga County
DeWitt	Onondaga
East Syracuse	Phoenix
Fayetteville	Pompey
Geddes	Salina
Hastings	Solvay
LaFayette	Sullivan
Liverpool	Syracuse
Lysander	Van Buren
Manlius Town	NYS Fairgrounds

The CNY Stormwater Coalition is coordinated by:



Announcements

Saratoga Nursey spring sale is open! Order your native trees and shrubs by May 13th.

Visit the [DEC online](#) to learn more:

Register for the [2022 Stormwater Training Series](#) online:

April 27th Stormwater Filtration and Infiltration Practices

May 18th Updates for the MS4 Permit

June 8th SWPPP Preparation and Review

Visit the CNY Stormwater website
<https://www.cnyrpd.org/stormwater>



@CNYStormwater