

What can I do as a property owner?

Here are a few things that individuals can do to help keep our waterways clean:

- Aim downspouts onto grassy areas of your yard, not on driveways or walkways. This allows the ground to absorb the water instead of having the water flow into storm drains.
- Gutters and down spouts should drain onto vegetated or gravel- filled seepage areas - not directly onto paved surfaces. Splash blocks also help reduce erosion.
- Use rain barrels which collect rain from your downspouts for outdoor watering needs.
- Divert runoff from pavement to grassy, planted or wooded areas of your property, so stormwater can seep slowly into the ground.
- Plant a rain garden. Rain gardens contain native plant species that retain stormwater runoff and allow the water to soak back into the ground at a natural rate.
- Allow thick vegetation or buffer strips to grow along waterways to slow runoff and soak up pollutants. Plant trees, shrubs, and ground cover. They will absorb up to 14 times more rainwater than a grass lawn and don't require fertilizer.
- Control soil erosion on your property by planting ground cover and stabilizing erosion-prone areas.
- Don't hose down driveways or sidewalks. Dry sweeping paved areas, along with careful trash disposal, are simple, effective pollution reducers.
- Wash your car on the grass so soapy water soaks into the ground. Use a hose nozzle to prevent water from running when not in use. Or better, use a carwash that facility that does not produce polluted runoff.
- Do not discard or dump trash, oil, or chemicals into storm drains. Storm drains lead directly into our waterways.
- Keep litter, leaves and debris out of street gutters and storm drains—these outlets drain directly to lake, streams, rivers and wetlands.
- Compost grass clippings and leaves. Never allow them to wash into roadways where they will reach storm drains.
- Animal wastes contain bacteria and viruses that contaminate shellfish and cause the closing of bathing areas. Pet owners should pick up after their pets and dispose of the wastes in the garbage or toilet.

- Use natural alternatives to chemical fertilizers and pesticides. If you must use chemicals, test your soil to determine the right amount.
- Apply lawn and garden chemicals sparingly and according to directions.
- Purchase household detergents and cleaners that are low in phosphorous to reduce the amount of nutrients discharged into our lakes, streams and coastal waters.
- Dispose of used oil, antifreeze, paints and other household chemicals properly—not in storm sewers or drains. If your community does not already have a program for collecting household hazardous wastes, ask your local government to establish one. Recycle all used motor oil by taking it to a service station or local recycling center.
- Clean up spilled brake fluid, oil, grease and antifreeze. Do not hose them into the street where they can eventually reach local streams and lakes.
- Limit the amount of impenetrable surfaces in your landscape. Use permeable paving surfaces such as wood decks, bricks, and concrete lattice to let water soak into the ground.
- Have your septic system inspected and pumped, at a minimum every three to five years, so that it operates properly.
- Get involved in the planning and zoning process in your community. That's where the decisions are made that shape the course of development and the future quality of our environment.
- Encourage county and local government officials to monitor erosion and sediment control measures and enforce regulations at construction sites in your community.

For additional information about upcoming events and resources on rain gardens, please see <http://www.ghcet.org/>

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Garrett Hill Coalition and project partners:
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