What is Stormwater Runoff?

Stormwater runoff occurs when rain or melted snow flows over parking lots, sidewalks, streets, or any other surface that cannot absorb water. As stormwater runoff moves, it picks up dirt, trash, oil, grease, fertilizers, and other pollutants and carries them into the storm drain system, which empties directly into local waterways.

Stormwater runoff does not flow to a treatment plant; it flows directly into our streams, bay and ocean. Pollution from untreated stormwater runoff affects drinking water supplies, recreation, fisheries and wildlife.

Start at Home

Every day activities greatly affect the health of our waterways. This guide contains tips on how you can help protect our waterways, starting at home.

start here

askHRgreen.org

for tips on keeping it clean and finding your inner green.

"Ask HR Green" is a regional awareness campaign sponsored by 16 Hampton Roads cities and counties working together with the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission.

A Clean, Healthy Bay Starts at Home

Residential Guide to Stormwater Runoff

askHRgreen.org

Your Pets

Pick up pet waste. Always clean up after your dog, whether it's on your lawn, in the park or at the beach.

Carry extra bags. Take along bags when walking your dog and make them available to other pet owners who are without. When traveling with your dog, ensure you always have extra bags in your car.

Pools & Spas

Let it be. Before draining, let pool water sit for several days without treating to allow chlorine to dissipate.

Break down chlorine. Add sodium thiosulphate to break down chlorine faster.

Avoid algaecides. Maintain your pool's chemicals properly and avoid use of copper sulfate.

Check PH and drain only clear water. Water should not appear murky and PH should be between 6.5 and 8.5 before draining.

Drain water to grassy areas. Grassy areas will soak up water rather than let it flow to nearby storm drains.

Clean your pool, fountain or spa regularly. Maintain proper chlorine levels, water filtration and circulation.

Vehicle Maintenance

Repair Leaks. If you discover spots in your driveway, or have to fill fluids often, make repairs right away.

Clean up leaks or spills promptly. Use dry, absorbent materials, such as cat litter, and a broom to clean up leaks. Be careful to keep dirty water from running into the street and storm drain when hosing down garage floor or driveway.

Use drip pans. Install a drip pan under a leak until it is repaired. Place large pans under wrecked cars to catch fluids.

Recycle waste oil. When you change your own oil, use an oil change box. Change your oil away from storm drains and have old rags or other absorbent materials available to respond in case of a spill. Take used oil to an auto parts store or hazardous waste collection facility.

Recycle antifreeze/coolant. Bring used coolant to an auto parts store or hazardous waste collection facility. Check your radiator hoses when changing your oil and inspect your car at the first sign of a coolant leak.

Recycle used batteries. Many auto parts stores accept old batteries for recycling.

Be mindful of runoff. Do not store used vehicle parts in areas that drain to the storm drain.

Wash vehicles on grass or gravel. Wash your car only in areas that allow water to soak into the ground. If you wash your car on a street, use soap sparingly, and use a hose nozzle with flow restriction or a bucket and sponge to minimize runoff and save water. Dispose of the dirty, soapy water in a utility sink, on grass or gravel.

Household Hazardous Waste

Recycle. Bring leftover hazardous waste materials to a hazardous waste event (VPPSA holds numerous throughout the year for Peninsula residents, www.vppsa.com), one of the five SPSA hazardous waste collection facilities (www.spsa.com), or the Virginia Beach Landfill at 1989 Jake Sears Road.

Reduce. Buy and use only the amount needed. Leftovers can be shared or donated.

Use alternative products. Select non-hazardous or less hazardous components that do the same job.

Item	Method	Disposal
CFLs, cleaning products, fungicides, insect repellants & sprays, paints, stains, varnish, pesticides, weed killers, swimming pool chemicals	Label contents of containers	Hazardous waste recycling event or collection facility
Household batteries	Recycle	Battery stores or E-cycling event
Electronics	Recycle	E-cycling event
FOG (fats, oils, & grease)	Cool or freeze in sealed container	Trash or recycling event
Prescription drugs	Remove personal information, crush or dilute meds and mix with cat litter, sawdust, etc. Seal in original container	Deposit in trash or take to pharmacy
Antifreeze, car batteries, motor oil, brake & transmission fluid, car wax, gasoline	Label contents of containers containing liquid and recycle	Auto parts store, VPPSA or SPSA collection facility or recycling event

Lawn & Garden

A healthier Bay means a safer environment for us all to enjoy for years to come. Your yard can be one of the greatest defenses against water pollution. Choose native trees, shrubs and plants to help stabilize soil, absorb and filter stormwater runoff. There are plenty of ways to maintain a beautiful, healthy, Bay-friendly landscape. Here are just a few of them...

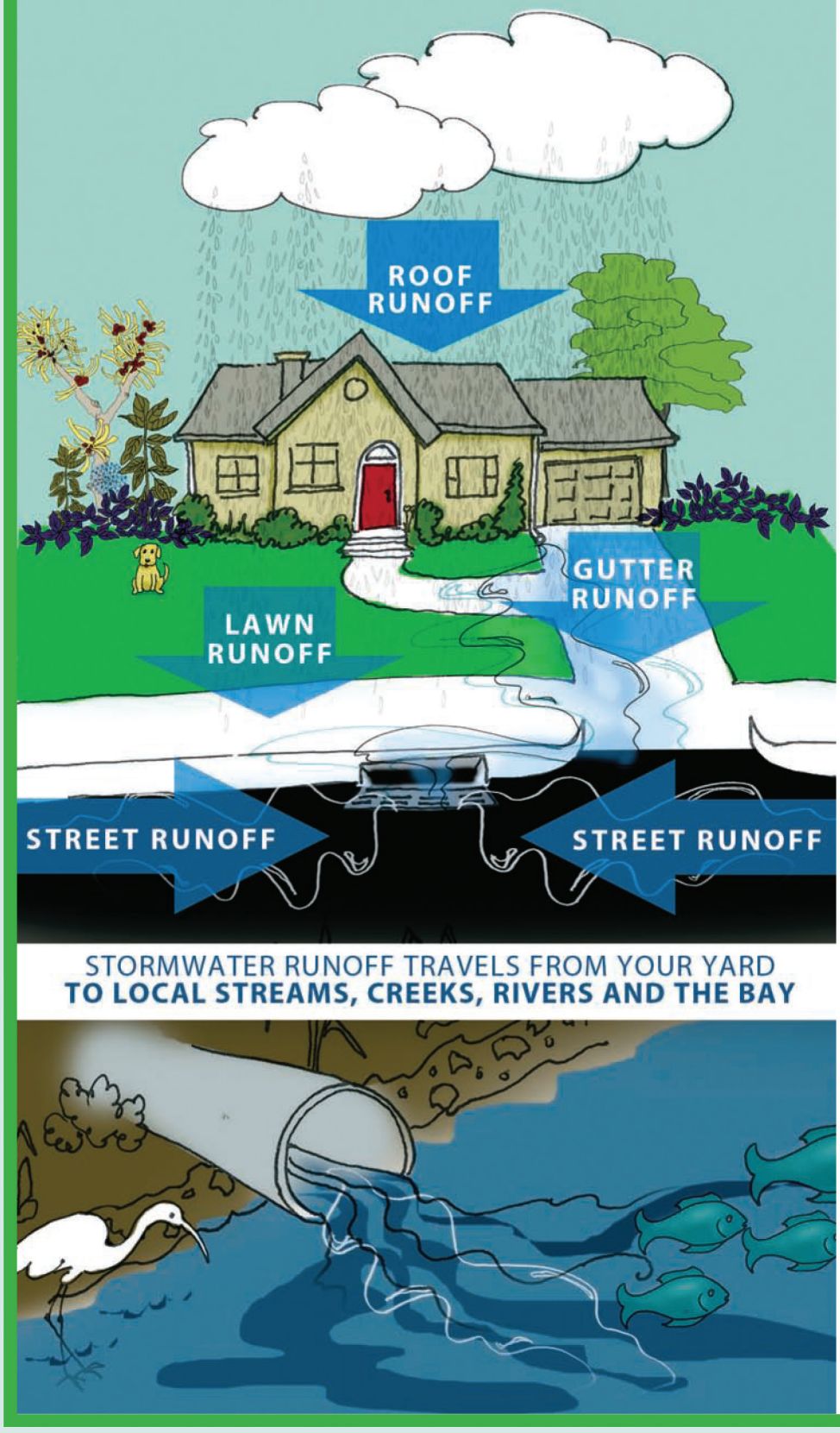
Plant Native Flowers, Trees and Shrubs

Trees, shrubs and hardy perennials can beautify your home and help reduce stormwater runoff. Use plants that are adjusted to local growing conditions. Consider native plants; they are typically more resistant to insects and disease and use less water and fertilizer.

Mulch, Mulch, Mulch

Mulch helps to control erosion, retain moisture and stabilize soil temperature. A two-inch layer of mulch material, such as fir bark, pine needles or wood chips, will reduce water loss and maintain uniform soil moisture around roots. Mulch can also reduce or eliminate weeds that compete with landscape plants for moisture, nutrients, and sunlight.

PLANT MORE PLANTS



By planting more plants, homeowners can improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

As stormwater flows across hard surfaces and through landscaped areas, it carries particulates through drainage systems and into local waterways. Harmful amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus, sediments and other pollutants are channeled from residences directly into the waters of the Bay.

These pollutants include:
- fertilizer
- pesticides
- topsoil
- oil and gasoline
- pet waste

Homeowners can mitigate the amount of harmful elements that reach the Bay through landscaping practices that include reducing hard surfaces, fertilizing responsibly and planting native trees, shrubs, plants and grasses.

Choosing the right species and planting in abundance will establish expansive root systems to hold soil in place, creating a natural filter that reduces the harmful effects of fertilizers, pesticides and spilled fuels.

Graphic used with permission from **PlantMorePlants.com**

Sweep It Up

Clean up anything that is lying on pavement. Fertilizer spill? Sweep or blow it into the yard, not into the street.

Mow It

Proper mowing is important for a well-kept lawn. Newly seeded lawns should be mowed early and often, leaving 1.5 to 2.0 inches of grass height. Once your lawn is established, set the mower blade higher, leaving 2 to 3.5 inches of grass.

Test Your Soil

Save money by having your soil tested. Soil testing will ensure you get the right fertilizer with the nutrient levels that your lawn requires and will determine the right amount needed so you don't over fertilize. Testing should be done every 3-4 years in the fall.

Fertilize in the Fall

Apply fertilizer in the fall when there is typically less rain and less chance for it to be washed off your lawn. Keep fertilizer off paved surfaces and never apply it to driveways, sidewalks, or roadways.

Know Your Grass

For cool season grass, such as fescue or ryegrass, seed in the late summer. For warm season grass, such as zoysiagrass or Bermuda grass, seed in early spring. Seed bare areas during the appropriate time of year to reduce erosion potential.

Leave Lawn Clippings

After mowing, leave grass clippings on your lawn. Clippings break down and return nitrogen to the lawn, generating up to 25% of the lawn's fertilizer needs.

A Clean, Healthy Bay Starts at Home Find out more at askHRgreen.org