

GREEN LIVING

SPRING 2012

YOUR GUIDE TO EVERYTHING GREEN IN HAMPTON ROADS

GOOD to KNOW

grab your work gloves and get ready for the
Great American Cleanup™
NATIONAL ACTION DAYS

take back the tap!
THE CLEAR CHOICE

money-saving
Spring landscaping tips

CAN THE GREASE, PLEASE

shoot to win
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do you know what's recyclable?

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Spring into Action with askHRgreen.org

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Green Living*, your guide to everything green in Hampton Roads! Plans for this spring section sprouted last year when the folks at askHRgreen.org were brainstorming ways to reach Southeastern Virginia residents with simple steps they can take to make our region a more sustainable and vibrant place to live. In addition, we wanted to share information about the great municipal programs in place that help you to be good environmental stewards whether it's at home, in the yard, at work, in school—or around the neighborhood.

and the 16 cities and counties we serve. The campaign features a website, askHRgreen.org, filled with easy-to-do green practices, an interactive calendar, community resources and the "Let's Talk Green" blog, written by a team of local experts who work in the region's municipal utility and environmental divisions. Please visit both the site and facebook.com/askHRgreen, and join the dialogue!

Green Living is an extension of our website, and we hope you find the following articles, tips and guides helpful. So dig in, enjoy and tuck *Green Living* away for the next time you need a little green inspiration.

All the Best—

Julia B. Hillegass,
askHRgreen.org Team Leader
Public Information and
Community Affairs
Administrator, Hampton Roads
Planning District Commission
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Encouraging people to find their "inner green" is the premise behind askHRgreen.org, a region-wide public awareness campaign of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission

GOODtoKNOW

Calling All Watershed Restoration Groups

Be a part of the regional conversation by submitting information about your watershed restoration group at askHRgreen.org/watershed-restoration-groups or at facebook.com/askHRgreen. We'll feature your listing on a dedicated web page so that others can learn about your projects, events and efforts to improve our Hampton Roads environment.

Cash for the Classroom

Educators, take note! askHRgreen.org offers environmental education mini-grants of up to \$500 to provide funding for environmentally-themed projects for your classroom. All Hampton Roads school teachers (K-12), youth leaders or organizations working with youth are eligible to apply. Visit askhrgreen.org/mini-grant-program for details and an online application.

Shoot to Win with "Good to Do" Video Contest

Budding videographers will have the chance to score a vacation trip for two and other prizes when they submit their green-themed work in the *Good to Do* Video Contest sponsored by askHRgreen.org. Contestants may create and submit a video demonstrating best green practices and facts gleaned from the askHRgreen.org website. For contest rules, regulations and details, visit askHRgreen.org/video-contest. Start filming now! Videos will be posted beginning June 1, with winners announced June 25.

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To learn about all things GOODtoYOU just askHRgreen.org

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Money-Saving Lawn & Landscaping Tips

We can't give you a money tree, but we can give you lawn and landscaping tips to save you both money—and time. This spring, when yard work beckons, consider these easy-to-implement practices:

Treat Your Soil Right

Test your soil every 3-4 years to determine exactly what your lawn needs so you don't waste money overfeeding and damaging your yard. If your lawn does need fertilizer, make sure rain isn't in the two-day forecast, and keep the fertilizer off paved surfaces, driveways, sidewalks and roadways. To learn more about proper fertilizer use, visit askHRgreen.org/fertilizing.

Go Native with Your Plantings

Trees, shrubs and hardy perennials not only beautify your yard, they keep the soil in its place and slow down the flow of rain water so it soaks deep within the ground. When selecting new plantings, choose native varieties which require less or no watering and fertilizer. A bonus: These plants are more resistant to insects and diseases.

Mulch, Mulch, Mulch

A two-inch layer of mulch material, such as fir bark, pine needles or wood chips, will control erosion, retain

moisture, reduce water loss and stabilize the soil temperature. Mulch also can reduce or eliminate weeds, freeing you up to reach for your tennis racket instead of a rake.

Mow at the Proper Height

Newly-seeded lawns should be mowed early and often, leaving 1.5 to 2 inches of grass height. Once your lawn is established, set the mower blade higher, leaving 2 to 3.5 inches of grass.

Water Wisely

Water only when your lawn is stressed from lack of water. Then, water deeply, but infrequently, to encourage deep roots. Typically, a total of 1 inch of water a week is all you need.

For more lawn and landscape tips, visit askHRgreen.org/lawn-garden-care



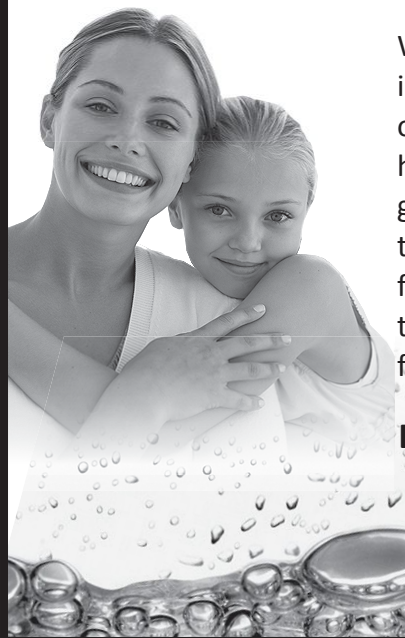
the Scoop on Poop

Dog poop is not a fertilizer! Instead of turning your grass green, it will cause burns and unsightly discoloring to your lawn. Keep pet waste off the lawn, out of the storm drain and away from our streams, bay and ocean. Simply scoop it, bag it and trash it in the garbage. Request a free "Scoop the Poop" sticker for your trashcan or car at askHRgreen.org/contact or on facebook.com/askHRgreen.



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We use water every day without ever thinking twice about it, but for some people in our community, losing water service is a harsh reality. The Help to Others (H2O) Program provides a one-time helping hand to those in need. Please help keep the water flowing by donating to H2O. 100% of your tax-deductible contribution helps a local family in crisis.

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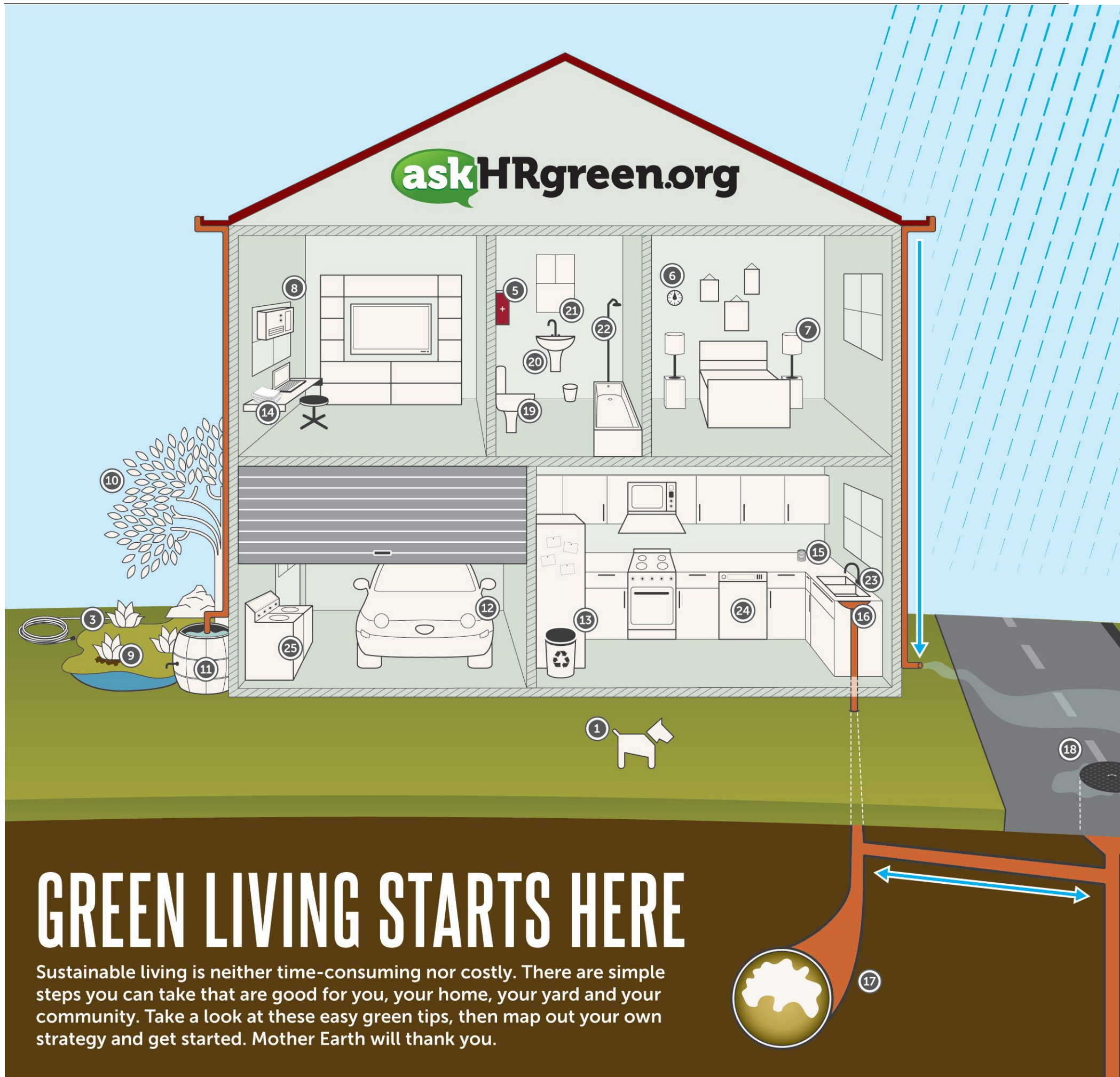
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GREEN LIVING STARTS HERE

Sustainable living is neither time-consuming nor costly. There are simple steps you can take that are good for you, your home, your yard and your community. Take a look at these easy green tips, then map out your own strategy and get started. Mother Earth will thank you.

GOOD to DO

KEEP WATERWAYS SAFE & CLEAN

- ① **Scoop It! Bag It! Trash It!** Pet waste is harmful to humans, other animals and our waterways.
- ② **Only rain down the storm drain.** All storm drains in Hampton Roads lead directly to our favorite waterways. Keep storm drains clean and never let anything but rain water go down the storm drain.
- ③ **Use a hose nozzle when watering your garden or washing your car.** Always use a hose bib vacuum breaker to prevent backflow. 
- ④ **Be smart about fertilizer use.** Have your soil tested. Make sure you know what your lawn really needs to thrive. It might need a lot less than you think. **Bring Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) to a local HHW event or collection facility.** HHW includes cleaning products, automotive fluids, lawn and garden sprays, CFL bulbs, and more. Leftover HHW cannot be poured down the drain, on the ground, into the storm drain, or put out with the trash. 
- ⑤ **Bring unused prescription drugs to a take-back event.** If you can't get to a take-back event, then crush solid medication, dissolve in water and then mix with kitty litter, sawdust, coffee grounds, etc.

askHRgreen.org/stormwater-runoff

BE EFFICIENT



- ⑥ **Adjust the thermostat settings for peak efficiency.** Install a programmable thermostat and set it to complement your family's schedule.
- ⑦ **Switch to more efficient light bulbs.** Energy Star qualified lighting not only uses less energy, but also produces approximately 75 percent less heat than incandescent lighting, so cooling bills will be reduced.
- ⑧ **Change the AC filter at least every three months.** Check your cooling system's air filter every month and change it if the filter looks dirty.

askHRgreen.org/energy-saving-cooling

BE SMART OUTDOORS



- ⑨ **Mulch!** Add a two-inch layer of mulch material, such as fir bark, pine needles or wood chips, to control erosion, retain moisture, reduce water loss, stabilize the soil temperature, and reduce weeds.
- ⑩ **Choose native, drought-tolerant trees, shrubs and plants.** Native plants are hardy, drought tolerant and insect and disease resistant. They'll last longer and require less work from you.
- Water your lawn wisely.** Typically, a total of 1 inch of water is all your grass needs. Use a rain gauge to measure rainfall, and include rain water in your calculations.
- ⑪ **Install a rain barrel.** Rain barrels are an easy way to enjoy the benefits of a rain shower for days and days.
- ⑫ **Take your car to the car wash.** If you can't, wash your car on an area that absorbs water, such as gravel or grass.

Install water-efficient drip irrigation systems for your landscaping. With drip irrigation there is little water loss from evaporation or runoff. It's good for mulched areas because it can directly soak into the soil without washing away mulch.

askHRgreen.org/smart-water-use-outdoor

REDUCE | REUSE | RECYCLE



- ⑬ **Recycle!** Keep your recycling container in an accessible location.
- Reuse your plastic bags.** Keep a plastic bag holder in your kitchen.
- Keep reusable shopping bags handy.** Put them in your car or in your purse and remember to use them for your grocery shopping. 
- ⑭ **Reduce and recycle junk mail and telephone books.** Remove your name from unsolicited mailing lists and directories. Junk mail and phone books can be recycled.

askHRgreen.org/3rs

PROTECT YOUR PIPES




- ⑮ **Never pour Fats, Oils, and Grease down the drain.** This includes your kitchen sink and the toilet!
- ⑯ **Do not use the garbage disposal.** Instead, use a strainer to catch food scraps then toss them into the trash. Environmentally friendly garbage disposals are a myth! 
- ⑰ **Properly dispose of Fats, Oils, and Grease.** Otherwise, pipes will clog
- ⑱ **causing damage to your household plumbing, and may even result in overflows that harm the storm water system.**
- ⑲ **Think before you flush.** Only dispose of human waste and toilet paper in the toilet. Anything else damages your plumbing.

askHRgreen.org/fats-oils-grease-disposal

USE WATER WISELY



- ⑳ **Fix leaks!** Check toilets and faucets for leaks, then fix 'em. Turn off all water inside the house, if the meter is still turning, you have a leak.
- Install high efficiency/low-flow toilets, showerheads and fixtures.** Look for the WaterSense label.
- ㉑ **Turn off the faucet** while brushing your teeth.
- ㉒ **Take shorter showers.** Time yourself and try to keep it under 5 minutes.
- Choose tap vs bottled water.** Fill a pitcher with tap water and keep it in the fridge. Get in the habit of always using a refillable water bottle when you're on the move. 
- ㉓ **Catch the water** when rinsing fruits and vegetables and use it to water the plants!
- ㉔ **Wait for full loads.** Only use the dishwasher and washing machine when they're full.
- ㉕

askHRgreen.org/smart-water-use-indoor



Quench Your Thirst with TapIt Hampton Roads!

In a partnership with area businesses, askHRgreen.org will soon launch a refreshingly cool reusable water bottle refill network. Stay tuned for details about TapIt Hampton Roads at askHRgreen.org.

Take Back the Tap

We live in a world where over a billion people are without access to safe, clean drinking water and an estimated three million people die annually from preventable waterborne diseases. Yet, in Hampton Roads, we can drink from any public tap with the highest level of confidence, never having to think twice about the quality of the product that comes out of our taps.

When it comes to safety, tap water is the clear choice. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires routine testing of tap water to ensure it is safe for everyone to drink. Here in Hampton Roads, our water has always met or exceeded EPA standards for safe drinking water. In many ways, EPA's standards for tap water are more stringent than the Food and Drug Administration's standards for bottled water. In fact, a third of all bottled water in the United States is actually just filtered tap water.

The oil and energy required for the production and distribution of bottled water is staggering. In the United States we buy more than two billion bottles of water each month, and less than 25 percent of those bottles

actually get recycled. So why do we spend so much money on bottled water that costs thousands of times more than tap water? You can pay a dollar or more for a bottle of water, or for that same dollar, you could refill a sports bottle over 1,000 times.

It's time we take back the tap to protect our wallets, our health and our community. What can you do? Prevent pollution and decrease waste by choosing tap over bottled water. Grab a reusable bottle on your way out the door to reduce your reliance on bottled alternatives. And show your appreciation for the value and vital role of drinking water by supporting investment in public infrastructure so we can continue to enjoy clean, safe, affordable tap water for generations to come.



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Skip the **FOG Forecast** by Keeping Drains Fat Free

FOG. You probably think of this as a weather term, but FOG (fats, oils and grease) takes on a whole new meaning when it comes to what lies beneath our streets, lurks under manholes and clings to the insides of pipes that connect right to your very own kitchen sink. Sound like a horror film? It is scary when you consider that FOG contributes to more than half of all sanitary sewer blockages in Hampton Roads.

Money-Saving Tip

There are plenty of ways to spend \$150.

A visit from the plumber shouldn't be one of them.

To avoid sewage backups and unnecessary bills, keep the following oily, greasy foods out of your drain and garbage disposal:

- butter/margarine
- lards/shortening
- cake batter
- icing
- food scraps
- salad dressings
- sauces
- dairy products (yogurt, sour cream, cream cheese, etc.)

More info at askHRgreen.org

Poured or washed down the drain into the sanitary sewer system, FOG clings to pipe walls and builds up over time, blocking the flow of wastewater exiting a home's plumbing. This can lead to an overflow or backup of wastewater into our homes or onto our streets and down storm drains which lead straight to local waterways.

You might be surprised that the source of all this greasy buildup in our pipes is not just cooking oils or grease. You'll find it daily in your kitchen in the form of meats, butter, food scraps, dairy products, batters, dressings, sauces, and more. So, how do we fight the fat to protect pipes and prevent costly blockages and backups?

- 1) Skip the garbage disposal and always be mindful of what you wash down the drain.
- 2) Use a basket strainer to catch food particles and toss them in the trash or compost bin.
- 3) Scrape plates and wipe cookware with a paper towel prior to washing.
- 4) Never pour used cooking grease down the drain. Instead, pour it into an empty, heat-safe container, like a soup can, let it cool and harden, then toss it out with the garbage.

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askHRgreen.org/the-great-american-cleanup

Visit askHRgreen.org/calendar
 for other regional cleanup events news.

Volunteers to Cleanup & Green Up Hampton Roads This Spring

From Poquoson to Portsmouth and Newport News to Norfolk, cleanup projects are planned throughout Hampton Roads this month and beyond when hundreds of volunteers mobilize as part of Keep America Beautiful's Great American Cleanup™ National Action Days, April 27-28.

Earlier this year, Keep America Beautiful selected Hampton Roads as one of 10 national sites to host these transformational community events the last weekend in April, with additional cleanup projects planned for the spring and summer. According to regional event partners askHRgreen.org and Keep Virginia Beautiful, these "cleanup and green up" projects will have long-lasting benefits for Southeastern Virginia communities, thanks to the volunteers.

"Last year, Great American Cleanup volunteers nationwide removed 177 million pounds of litter and debris from parks, public lands, wetlands and trails, and they collected more than 215.2 million plastic bottles for recycling. In addition they spruced up playgrounds, remediated illegal dump sites and planted 166,000 trees, among many other accomplishments," said Regional Project Chairman John Deuel. "This speaks so well of America's commitment to volunteerism, and I know that Hampton Roads residents are ready to step up and make a difference here at home."

Deuel is counting on having at least 1,500 volunteers participate in more than 60 organized Great American Cleanup projects in Hampton Roads. Working with local municipalities in most of the 16 cities and counties, askHRgreen.org leaders helped to coordinate a wide variety of half-day projects from which volunteers could choose.

Norfolk, Portsmouth and Virginia Beach are coordinating citywide cleanups of neighborhoods, parks and recreation areas. Chesapeake has planned a gateway beautification project at Bainbridge Boulevard. Suffolk volunteers will pick up litter along Shingle Creek, and Smithfield is planning an Earth Day cleanup at Windsor Castle Park.

A few miles away, Hampton volunteers will convene for an "Interchange Change," picking up litter along the intersection of LaSalle Avenue and Mercury Boulevard. James City County will host a shoreline beautification project at the Chickahominy Riverfront Park, while York County will host a "Keep York County Beautiful Day." In Poquoson, plans are in place for a cleanup along the city's "blueway trail" between Messick Point and Amory Wharf that will require the aide of local fishermen.

"We'll be cleaning up both the shoreline and the waterway," said Evie Insley, who serves as administrative support technician for the city of Poquoson. "We thought if we had shallow draw boats on the water, it would work. We're also

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2 FERTILIZER IS COSTLY

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3 FISH & CRABS HATE FERTILIZER

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To learn about all things **GOOD&YOU** just **askHRgreen.org**

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Giving back to one's community by cleaning up the environment is something that Deuel hopes everyone will do.

"It's a great way for people to see their neighbors, meet new friends and see how we're all connected to the region," Deuel said. "And, it's a lot of fun."

Check askHRgreen.org for volunteer opportunities.



Great American Cleanup event organizers gratefully acknowledge the support of these local sponsors:

WNOR FM 99, 106.9 The Fox, Walmart, Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, Retail Alliance, Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Adams, Virginia Zoo, Newport News Shipbuilding, GEICO, Volunteer Hampton Roads, Virginia Green, Special Olympics Virginia, Jones Printing Services, Inc., Hampton Roads American Marketing Association, Shula's 347 Grill – Norfolk Waterside Marriott, Five Points Community Farm Market – Get Fresh Café, and Signs By Tomorrow.



asking volunteers to wear their 'bubba boots' for cleaning up debris along the shoreline."

Recycling events are in the mix too, with electronics and household hazardous waste collections in Newport News and a reusable bag exchange and plastic bag recycling event in Isle of Wight County. Both collections will take place April 27.

Not only is the Great American Cleanup drawing scores of individual volunteers, the event has sparked the interest of local businesses and military commands—including hundreds of sailors from the U.S.S. *Harry S. Truman*.

What to Recycle

Last year, national Great American Cleanup volunteers collected and recycled more than 215.2 million plastic bottles, 7.9 million pounds of electronics and over 12.1 million pounds of glass. Recycling at home is one of the easiest things you can do to keep such debris off of our greenscapes—and out of the landfill. Here's a snapshot of items that can be tossed in your recycling bin or taken to a nearby recycling center—and those that cannot.

YES

- Cardboard (flattened)
- Mixed paper (office paper, junk mail, cereal boxes, phone books, etc.)
- Plastic bottles with #1 or #2 on the bottom (one-gallon milk jugs, juice bottles, soda bottles, laundry detergent bottles, peanut butter containers, and salad dressing and vegetable oil containers)
- Glass bottles (all colors are accepted)
- Steel, tin and aluminum cans

NO

- Plastic bags (they can be recycled at most grocery stores or at plastic bag recycling events)
- Yard waste (check your locality's yard waste pickup schedule)
- Household hazardous waste (batteries, aerosol cans, paint cans, motor oil, etc. can be taken to your locality's household hazardous waste drop off site or event)

More recycling info at askHRgreen.org/recycling-at-home.

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There are many ways to lend a hand. Volunteer your time. Spearhead a cleanup project. Get your business involved. If you can't join us for the cleanup, consider a donation. Your gift will help underwrite costs associated with the Great American Cleanup™, while funding future cleanup projects and events right here in Hampton Roads.



For information about volunteering and donating please visit **askHRgreen.org/the-great-american-cleanup**