

# Yard & Garden Care

Keeping Your Yard & Garden Beautiful and our Waterways Clean



**What is urban runoff and storm water pollution, and what is the difference between them?** Urban runoff is the water that flows off our yards, streets, parking lots, and driveways into the storm drains and eventually into our creeks, lagoons and the ocean during the dry season. Whether it is from sprinkler over spray, car washing or hosing down the driveway, everyone is a potential contributor to urban runoff. Whereas storm water pollution occurs during the rainy season, with runoff picking up pollutants from our streets and gutters that flows directly into our local waterways. In either case, whether by rain or by everyday activities, the water flows into the storm drains picking up pollutants like soil, motor oil, pesticides, fertilizers, pet wastes, and litter. All these contaminants end up in our waterways. Many people mistakenly think that the water entering our storm drains is cleaned or treated in some way. **The storm drain system and sewer system are separate.** Our storm drain system channels water, untreated, directly into our creeks, lagoons and the ocean. If our runoff water and storm water is contaminated, it will cause beach closures and postings. Urban runoff is a major source of water pollution. **Acting Water Wise Helps Keep Our Waterways Clean. Prevent Storm Water Pollution and Urban Runoff.**

## HOW CAN GARDENING HURT OUR WATERWAYS?

Caring for your garden and landscape on property that is miles from the ocean may seem to have little to do with creek and ocean pollution, but many gardening activities can be quite detrimental to water quality. Normal landscape and garden maintenance activities can be major contributors to storm drain pollution. Soils, yard wastes, over watering, and garden chemicals become part of the urban runoff mix that winds its way through streets, gutters and storm drains before entering our creeks, lagoons and ultimately the ocean.

- Nutrients from fertilizers, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, promote algae blooms and excessive plant growth. Algae depletes oxygen making it unavailable to fish and other aquatic life. Algae blooms and excessive plants limit much needed sunlight.
- Pesticides and herbicides don't just kill garden pests, they also harm beneficial insects, aquatic plants and fish that live in our waterways.
- Yard waste such as leaves and grass are pollutants in our waterways because during decomposition they absorb oxygen needed by fish and aquatic animals.
- Sediments add suspended solids to water, clogging the gills of fish and blocking sunlight, affecting photosynthesis of aquatic plants and phytoplankton.



## URBAN RUNOFF FACT & FICTION

**Fiction:** *Runoff from streets and storm drains is treated at wastewater treatment plants.*

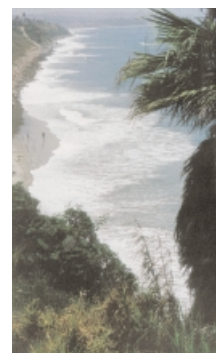
**Fact:** Storm drain runoff in San Diego County is not treated and goes directly into our creeks - what goes into the storm drain ends up at the beach. That's why it is important to insure pollutants such as animal waste, automotive fluids, fertilizers, pesticides, yard waste, and litter do not end up in the gutters and storm drains.

**Fiction:** *Industrial sources pose a much greater pollution threat than urban runoff discharges.*

**Fact:** Urban runoff rivals or exceeds discharges from factories and sewage plants as a source of pollution. The most common non-point source of urban runoff pollution comes from local residents.

**Fiction:** *What I do can't make a difference.*

**Fact:** Although an individual household might contribute only a minor amount of pollution, the combined effects of a neighborhood or city is serious.



## YOU CAN HELP

Whether you take care of your own yard or contract a professional service, you can play an important role in reducing storm water pollution, protecting water quality and conserving our valuable water and natural resources. By implementing the simple solutions in this fact sheet you can take part in protecting our local waterways and our beaches.

Waterways  
Clean

