

Recycle Compact Fluorescent Lights

Used CFLs can be recycled at all Home Depot locations. CFLs contain



approximately 4 milligrams of mercury. However, they reduce the amount of mercury released into the atmosphere by coal burning electricity generation plants because they use much less electricity than a standard incandescent bulb. It only takes 0.5 grams of mercury to permanently contaminate 5 million gallons of water, that's the amount of mercury in about 125 CFLs. Mercury from the bulbs can reach waterbodies from leaking landfills and torn trash bags on your curb.



Don't Sweep Grass Clippings Into Streets

When edging and mowing your lawn, do not allow grass clippings to remain in the street.

The clippings get washed into nearby storm drains and waterbodies. Most cities have ordinances against putting grass clippings and other yard waste into storm drains. Grass clippings have a high nitrogen and phosphorous content which can lead to algal blooms. In addition, the bacteria that degrade grass clippings and other organic matter use oxygen in the decay process. Excessive amounts of decaying organic litter can lead to low dissolved oxygen and fish kills. Grass clippings should be swept back into your yard or composted. Some cities have community composting facilities. If your city doesn't have a facility, try composting at home. Grass clippings, dead leaves, and vegetable scraps from your kitchen produce compost that can be used in gardens, potted plants, and on lawns.



Wash Cars On Your Lawn Using Non-Toxic Soap

If you wash your car at home, you should avoid washing in the driveway.

Water, soap, and dirt from your car runs down the street to the nearest storm drain and waterbody. Instead, wash your car on the lawn so that the water soaks into the ground rather than running off into the street. The soap used to wash cars can be toxic to aquatic life. There are several non-toxic and biodegradable alternatives. Ecover and Simple Green both make a car wash detergent. You can also make your own biodegradable car wash concentrate by mixing one cup of mild liquid dishwashing soap and 3/4 cup powdered laundry detergent with 3 gallons of water. You can mix this concentrate with a bucket of water to clean your car. Brands such as Seventh Generation, Method, and Ecover, which make biodegradable dish soap and laundry detergent, are readily available at many local stores.

Hand Water or Use Soaker Hoses Instead of Sprinklers

When watering your garden or lawn, use a soaker hose or hand water instead of using a sprinkler. Sprinklers can waste water if they spray water onto sidewalks, streets, or driveways. Soaker hoses can be placed only where water is needed such as around the base of plants where they deliver water directly to the soil around plant roots. You can also hand water with a watering can (especially if you collect rainwater) or with a water hose and fan sprayer attachment. Hand watering ensures that water only goes where it's needed and helps prevent over watering which can lead to runoff from your yard.



Trinity River Authority

Clean Rivers Program

Ten Simple Things YOU Can Do To Prevent Water Pollution



"A river is more than an amenity, it is a treasure."
-Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes-

"We forget that the water cycle and the life cycle are one."
-Jacques Cousteau-

Water, water everywhere, not a drop to spare
Water in the ground, water in the air
Though it may evaporate, it never goes away
Snows onto a mountaintop, flows into a bay
Animals need water, people need it too
Keep it clean for me and I'll keep it clean for you.
-Children's song-

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Don't Overuse Fertilizers & Pesticides

Follow application instructions carefully and don't use when a heavy rain is expected. Excess fertilizer and pesticide leads to algal blooms and poisoning of aquatic life. Test your soil before applying fertilizer to determine if it is needed. There are also many organic alternatives to chemical fertilizers and pesticides that can help reduce contamination of waterbodies. Grass clippings are an excellent source of nitrogen and phosphorus for your yard and garden. Dried or liquid molasses added to the soil encourages growth of beneficial microbes that can help make, and keep, your lawn and garden healthy. Ten percent vinegar is an effective general herbicide. Boiling water, orange oil, and diatomaceous earth, just to name a few, are safe alternatives for killing fire ants and controlling many other types of insects.



Recycle Used Motor Oil & Fix Leaking Vehicles

When you change the oil in your car, collect the old oil into a clean container and take it to your local auto parts store for recycling. Don't mix other fluids with the oil to be recycled. Never pour oil down storm drains or on the ground because storm drains flow directly into nearby streams. Used oil filters can also be recycled. The oil is drained and recycled along with the oil drained from your engine; the metal and plastic of the filter housing can be salvaged and recycled; and the oil soaked paper filter can be used as fuel in some industrial facilities. Leaks from vehicles account for a large portion of oil that ends up in waterbodies. Fix leaks as soon as possible to reduce pollution and oil use. Use drip pans when changing oil to prevent spills. One gallon of used oil can contaminate one million gallons of water.



Dispose Of Expired Medication According to Federal Guidelines

Some medications can enter waterbodies through improper disposal. The effects can range from bacterial resistance to antibiotics to the feminization of aquatic species. Many communities offer drug take-back programs and periodic household hazardous waste collection events where you can take your expired and unused medication for proper disposal. If these are not available in your community, you should remove the medication from the containers and mix it with cat litter, coffee grounds, or a similar material. This mixture should be placed in a disposable container such as a plastic baggie or a plastic tub and put into the trash. Never flush unused medications down the toilet or pour them down the drain.



Properly Dispose Of Pet Waste



About 20 percent of water pollution from fecal matter comes from dogs. Nitrogen in the waste can lead to algal blooms and the bacteria and parasites in

pet waste can be harmful to humans. You should always pick up pet waste from your yard and when you take your pet for walks. Reuse plastic grocery bags or new paper bags for this purpose. Pet supply stores sell plastic waste bags and bag dispensers that can be attached to leashes to keep them handy during walks. The waste can be placed in the trash; flushed down the toilet; buried at least 5 inches deep in the yard away from play areas, gardens, and waterbodies; or placed in pet waste digesters which are available at many pet supply stores.



Collect & Use Rainwater

Rainwater can easily be collected into containers to be used for watering lawns and gardens. Many cities offer "make-and-take" classes to teach people how to make rain barrels from easily found materials. Recycled 55 gallon food grade barrels can be purchased for as little as \$15 and can be found at local livestock feed stores. Additional materials such as spigots and hoses can be found at any hardware store. Container openings should be covered with screens to keep mosquitoes, children, and wildlife from accessing the water. If a community of 6,000 homes each collected 2 barrels of rainwater a year, that water would fill up an Olympic sized swimming pool. That's more than 660,000 gallons of water that would not run off yards and carry pollutants to waterbodies. It also reduces demand on public water supply systems.



Use Reusable Bags

Reusable bags help reduce the amount of plastic bags that end up in landfills or waterbodies. 100 billion plastic shopping bags are used in the U.S. each year. Wildlife often mistake plastic as food and ingest it

which leads to intestinal blockage, starvation, and death. Plastic never goes away, it photodegrades which means that it only breaks down into smaller pieces which are still harmful to the environment and wildlife. Reusable bags are available at most stores for a small price in materials ranging from recycled polypropylene to canvas. Better yet, make your own reusable bag by recycling old clothes, sheets, or curtains if they can't be given to a shelter or charity. Several websites provide free patterns and instructions on how to make your own bags (Google: Reusable Bag Pattern).