

Reducing water pollution easier than you might think

Most people know that the water that goes down your sink goes to the water treatment plant. But what about the water that runs off your lawn, sidewalk and driveway from rain and snowmelt? Many people think that water gets treated, too. But it doesn't.

In most cities, water that flows down the curb into the sewer system – picking up all kinds of pollution from fertilizers, oil, grease, and toxic chemicals – goes directly to our rivers and streams. That's partly why 40 percent of Ohio's rivers and streams remain too polluted to fish or swim in.

When the Clean Water Act was passed in 1977, it was industry that was the big polluter of our waterways, but they've done their part to help clean up our rivers and streams. Now it's our turn.

The good news is that a few minor changes in your routine around the house can have a big impact on water quality.

- Apply lawn and garden chemicals sparingly and according to directions. When you mulch your grass clippings, be sure to blow them back into the yard not into the street.
- Keep litter, leaves and debris out of street gutters and storm drains, which drain directly to our rivers and streams.
- Wash your car on the lawn, letting the soap soak into the soil where it can be absorbed.
- Clean up after your pet, removing feces from your lawn.
- Don't pour used oil, antifreeze, paints, and other household chemicals down the sewer. Instead take them to a local household hazardous waste collection program.
- Clean up spilled brake fluid, oil, grease, and antifreeze. Don't hose them into the street where they can reach local streams and lakes.
- Control soil erosion on your property by planting ground cover and stabilizing erosion-prone areas.
- Have your septic system inspected and pumped, at a minimum, every 3 to 5 years so that it operates properly.

Some information gathered from the US Environmental Protection Agency web site.