

# The Pollution Solution

Several residential activities can result in water pollution. Among these activities are car washing and hosing off driveways and sidewalks. Both activities can waste water and result in excess runoff. Water conservation methods described in this pamphlet can prevent considerable amounts of runoff and conserve water. By taking your car to a commercial car wash and by sweeping driveways and sidewalks, you can further prevent the transport of pollutants to Orange County waterways. Here are some of the common pollutants for which you can be part of the solution:

## 1 Pesticides and Fertilizer

- **Pollution:** The same pesticides that are designed to be toxic to pests can have an equally lethal impact on our marine life. The same fertilizer that promotes plant growth in lawns and gardens can also create nuisance algae blooms, which remove oxygen from the water and clog waterways when it decomposes.



- **Solution:** Never use pesticides or fertilizer within 48 hours of an anticipated rainstorm. Use only as much as is directed on the label and keep it off driveways and sidewalks.

## 2 Dirt and Sediment

- **Pollution:** Dirt or sediment can impede the flow of the stormwater and negatively impact stream habitat as it travels through waterways and deposits downstream. Pollutants can attach to sediment, which can then be transported through our waterways.

- **Solution:** Protect dirt stockpiles by covering them with tarps or secure plastic sheets to prevent wind or rain from allowing dirt or sediment to enter the storm drain system.

## 3 Metals

- **Pollution:** Metals and other toxins present in car wash water can harm important plankton, which forms the base of the aquatic food chain.

- **Solution:** Take your car to a commercial car wash where the wash water is captured and treated at a local wastewater treatment plant.

## 4 Pet Waste

- **Pollution:** Pet waste carries bacteria through our watersheds and eventually will be washed out to the ocean. This can pose a health risk to swimmers and surfers.

- **Solution:** Pick up after your pets!

## 5 Trash and Debris

- **Pollution:** Trash and debris can enter waterways by wind, littering and careless maintenance of trash receptacles. Street sweeping collects some of this trash; however, much of what isn't captured ends up in our storm drain system where it flows untreated out to the ocean.



- **Solution:** Don't litter and make sure trash containers are properly covered. It is far more expensive to clean up the litter and trash that ends up in our waterways than it is to prevent it in the first place. Come out to one of Orange County's many locations for Coastal and Inner-Coastal Cleanup Day, which is held in September.

## 6 Motor Oil / Vehicle Fluids

- **Pollution:** Oil and petroleum products from our vehicles are toxic to people, wildlife and plants.

- **Solution:** Fix any leaks from your vehicle and keep the maintenance up on your car. Use absorbent material such as cat litter on oil spills, then sweep it up and dispose of it in the trash. Recycle used motor oil at a local Household Hazardous Waste Collection Center.



## A TEAM EFFORT

The Orange County Stormwater Program has teamed with the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) and the University of California Cooperative Extension Program (UCCE) to develop this pamphlet.

Low Impact Development (LID) and sustainable water use prevents water pollution and conserves water for drinking and reuse. Reducing your water use and the amount of water flowing from your home protects the environment and saves you money.

## Thank you for making water protection a priority!

For more information, please visit

**Orange County Stormwater Program**  
[www.ocwatersheds.com/publiced/](http://www.ocwatersheds.com/publiced/)

**Municipal Water District of Orange County**  
[www.mwdoc.com](http://www.mwdoc.com)

**University of California Master Gardeners of Orange County**  
[www.uccemg.com](http://www.uccemg.com)

**UC Cooperative Extension OC Water Quality and Water Resources**  
[www.ucanr.org/sites/urbanwatermgmt/](http://www.ucanr.org/sites/urbanwatermgmt/)



To report a spill, call the Orange County 24-Hour Water Pollution Prevention Reporting Hotline at 1-877-89-SPILL \ (1-877-897-7455)

Special Thanks to  
The City of Los Angeles Stormwater Program for the use of its artwork

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California for the use of the California-Friendly Plant and Native Habitat photos

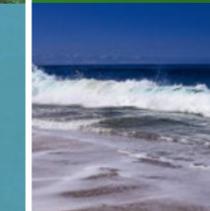


## Homeowners Guide for Sustainable Water Use

Low Impact Development, Water Conservation & Pollution Prevention



## The Ocean Begins at Your Front Door



### DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that most of the pollution found in our waterways is not from a single source, but from a "non-point" source meaning the accumulation of pollution from residents and businesses throughout the community.



# RUNOFF, RAINWATER AND REUSE

## Where Does Water Runoff Go?

Stormwater, or water from rainfall events, and runoff from outdoor water use such as sprinklers and hoses flows from homes directly into catch basins and the storm drain system. After entering the storm drain, the water flows untreated into streams, rivers, bays and ultimately the Pacific Ocean. Runoff can come from lawns, gardens, driveways, sidewalks and roofs. As it flows over hard, impervious surfaces, it picks up pollutants. Some pollutants carried by the water runoff include trash, pet waste, pesticides, fertilizer, motor oil and more.

## Water Conservation

Pollution not only impairs the water quality for habitat and recreation, it can also reduce the water available for reuse. Runoff allowed to soak into the ground is cleaned as it percolates through the soil, replenishing depleted groundwater supplies. Groundwater provides at least 50% of the total water for drinking and other indoor household activities in north and central Orange County. When land is covered with roads, parking lots, homes, etc., there is less land to take in the water and more hard surfaces over which the water can flow.

In Orange County, 60-70% of water used by residents and businesses goes to irrigation and other outdoor uses. Reusing rainwater to irrigate our lawn not only reduces the impact of water pollution from runoff, but it also is a great way to conserve our precious water resources and replenish our groundwater basin.

## What is Low Impact Development (LID)?

Low Impact Development (LID) is a method of development that seeks to maintain the natural hydrologic character of an area. LID provides a more sustainable and pollution-preventative approach to water management.

New water quality regulations require implementation of LID in larger new developments and encourage implementation of LID and other sustainable practices in existing residential areas. Implementing modifications to your lawn or garden can reduce pollution in our environment, conserve water and reduce your water bill.



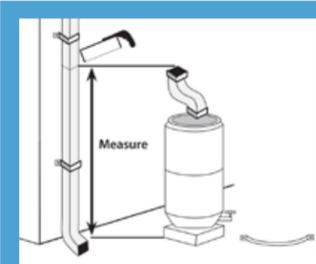
Permeable pavement allows water runoff to infiltrate through the soil and prevents most pollutants from reaching the storm drain system.

## OPTIONS FOR RAINWATER HARVESTING AND REUSE

Rainwater harvesting is a great way to save money, prevent pollution and reduce potable water use. To harvest your rainwater, simply redirect the runoff from roofs and downspouts to rain barrels. Rain gardens are another option; these reduce runoff as well as encourage infiltration.

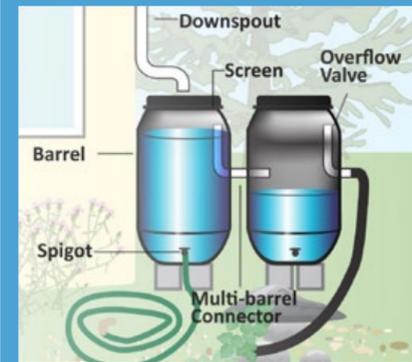
### Downspout Disconnection/Redirection

Disconnecting downspouts from pipes running to the gutter prevents runoff from transporting pollutants to the storm drain. Once disconnected, downspouts can be redirected to rain gardens or other vegetated areas, or be connected to a rain barrel.



### Rain Barrels

Rain barrels capture rainwater flow from roofs for reuse in landscape irrigation. Capacity of rain barrels needed for your home will depend on the amount of roof area and rainfall received. When purchasing your rain barrel, make sure it includes a screen, a spigot to siphon water for use, an overflow tube to allow for excess water to run out and a connector if you wish to connect multiple barrels to add capacity of water storage.



Mosquito growth prevention is very important when installing a rain barrel. The best way to prevent mosquito breeding is to eliminate entry points by ensuring all openings are sealed tightly. If these methods are unsuccessful, products are available to kill mosquito larvae, but that are harmless to animals and humans. Regular application of these products is essential. Please visit the Orange County Vector Control website for more information at [www.ocvcd.org/mosquitoes3.php](http://www.ocvcd.org/mosquitoes3.php).

For information on how to disconnect a downspout or to install and maintain a rain barrel or rain garden at your home, please see the Los Angeles Rainwater Harvesting Program, A Homeowner's "How-To" Guide, November 2009 at [www.larainwaterharvesting.org/](http://www.larainwaterharvesting.org/)



### Rain Gardens

Rain gardens allow runoff to be directed from your roof downspout into a landscaped area. Vegetation and rocks in the garden will slow the flow of water to allow for infiltration into the soil. Plants and soil particles will absorb pollutants from the roof runoff. By utilizing a native plant palette, rain gardens can be maintained all year with minimal additional irrigation. These plants are adapted to the semi-arid climate of Southern California, require less water and can reduce your water bill.

Before modifying your yard to install a rain garden, please consult your local building and/or planning departments to ensure your garden plan follows pertinent building codes and ordinances. Besides codes and ordinances, some home owner associations also have guidelines for yard modifications. If your property is in hill areas or includes engineered slopes, please seek professional advice before proceeding with changes.

## OTHER WATER CONSERVATION AND POLLUTION PREVENTION TECHNIQUES

### Native Vegetation and Maintenance

"California Friendly" plants or native vegetation can significantly reduce water use. These plants often require far less fertilizers and pesticides, which are two significant pollutants found in Orange County waterways. Replacing water "thirsty" plants and grass types with water efficient natives is a great way to save water and reduce the need for potentially harmful pesticides and fertilizer.

Please see the California Friendly Garden Guide produced by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and associated Southern California Water Agencies for a catalog of California friendly plants and other garden resources at [www.bewaterwise.com/Gardensoft](http://www.bewaterwise.com/Gardensoft).

### Weed Free Yards

Weeds are water thieves. They often reproduce quickly and rob your yard of both water and nutrients. Weed your yard by hand if possible. If you use herbicides to control the weeds, use only the amount recommended on the label and never use it if rain is forecast within the next 48 hours.



### Soil Amendments

Soil amendments such as green waste (e.g. grass clippings, compost, etc.) can be a significant source of nutrients and can help keep the soil near the roots of plants moist. However, they can cause algal booms if they get into our waterways, which reduces the amount of oxygen in the water and impacts most aquatic organisms. It is important to apply soil amendments more than 48 hours prior to predicted rainfall.

## IRRIGATE EFFICIENTLY

### Smart Irrigation Controllers

Smart Irrigation Controllers have internal clocks as well as sensors that will turn off the sprinklers in response to environmental changes. If it is raining, too windy or too cold, the smart irrigation control sprinklers will automatically shut off.

Check with your local water agency for available rebates on irrigation controllers and smart timers.

- Aim your sprinklers at your lawn, not the sidewalk – By simply adjusting the direction of your sprinklers you can save water, prevent water pollution from runoff, keep your lawn healthy and save money.
- Set a timer for your sprinklers – lawns absorb the water they need to stay healthy within a few minutes of turning on the sprinklers. Time your sprinklers; when water begins running off your lawn, you can turn them off. Your timer can be set to water your lawn for this duration every time.
- Water at Sunrise – Watering early in the morning will reduce water loss due to evaporation. Additionally, winds tend to die down in the early morning so the water will get to the lawn as intended.
- Water by hand – Instead of using sprinklers, consider watering your yard by hand. Hand-watering ensures that all plants get the proper amount of water and you will prevent any water runoff, which wastes water and carries pollutants into our waterways.
- Fix leaks - Nationwide, households waste one trillion gallons of water a year to leaks – that is enough water to serve the entire state of Texas for a year. If your garden hose is leaking, replace the nylon or rubber hose washer and ensure a tight connection. Fix broken sprinklers immediately.

Water runoff from sprinklers left on too long will carry pollutants into our waterways.

