Keys to Community Stormwater Management

And

Spring and Summer Tips for Yard Care

Sponsored by: Upland Borough Council

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SPRING AND SUMMER TIPS

March: Large trees are great stormwater control. At maturity, they intercept more than 1,000 gallons of rainwater each year. Their foliage and bark reduce runoff by intercepting rainfall and their broad leaf canopies also reduce the force of rain water hitting the soil, reducing erosion. Also, in the spring or fall you may want to explore converting a corner of your property to native warm season grasses. Their extensive root systems enrich the soil and absorb many times the amount of rainwater than that of turf grass.

Don't top your trees unless totally necessary. Topping trees, in many cases, can lead to the death of a tree. Topping causes the quick growth of dense, weak, upright branches called waterspouts. Sprouts caused by topping are often weakly attached. They grow so rapidly a tree can regain its original height in a short time with a dense and unwieldily crown. Topping removes a tree's food production factory, it's leaves and food stored in the limbs that are cut off. Topping, also causes a tree to use valuable food stored in the trunk and roots to regrow limbs and branches. It can also place a tree under stress and affect its tolerance to further injury.

April: Cut your grass at 2 ½ to 3 inches tall. Mow it often enough so that the clippings are not longer than one-third of the grass blade, so they can decompose easily in the soil. Spare your stream systems by avoiding spring fertilization, and leave your grass clippings on your lawn. Grass clippings supply between 25% and 50% of nitrogen and phosphorus needs. Also, mulched beds trap and infiltrate more rainwater than law or bare soil. Top off your garden with a thin layer of fresh mulch but make sure that your mulch does not touch tree bark, this will cause decomposition to the tree.

Plant a tree that is suitable for your property. Plant tree species that fit and will thrive in the places where they are planted. Don't plant large trees such as oaks, tulip poplar or sycamore under power lines, in small tree lawns, in sidewalk cutouts or close to buildings or signs. It is important to start with a healthy plant that has good structural form. Prune young trees in the first five to ten years of their life. Proper pruning of young trees promote correct development of structure, saves money by removing branches when they are small and keeps pruning wounds small.

May: Create new areas in your yard that will absorb roof water from down spouts, runoff from paved areas and puddles in compacted soil areas. Start a flower or vegetable patch, build a rain garden (see below) or establish a pocket meadow to absorb rainwater.

Landscaping your property significantly increases the property value. Now is a good time of the year to plan your garden. May is an excellent time of the spring to look into a rain barrel for your garden. The Chester Ridley Crum Watershed Program will be holding a workshop on rain barrels on May 5, 2010, at the Strath Haven High School. There will be a free lecture and demonstration on this subject. If you are interested, you may call 610-892-8731.

June: Raise your mower height to 3 inches for summer months. Taller grass grows deeper roots, shades and protects the soil and it is less prone to disease, pests and weeds. It also captures more excess rainwater on your property. Also, leave an unmowed edge, approximately three feet or more in width, along streams, ponds and drainage channels to prevent erosion. This is also a good time of the year to treat your lawn with biological controls for Japanese beetle grubs.

With the warm weather upon us in the month of June, remember that regular pool maintenance is important. As part of regular pool maintenance, residents need to be aware of ways to minimize the hazardous impact pool water has on our environment. Don't forget to pump pool water slowly out onto a grassy area, not into the storm drains. Never drain pool water directly into a stream, pond, storm drain or other bodies of water. Properly store chemicals to prevent leaks or spills.

July: Plants of all kinds help reduce stormwater runoff from residential properties. Their roots absorb water and break up and aerate the soil as they grow. Flowering native perennials will attractive beneficial predators and pollinator birds, butterflies and other insects. Perennials also develop extensive root systems to hold and enrich the soil. Monitor the plants for pests and control them with environmentally friendly applications or use plain water to avoid contaminating water runoff with chemicals that endanger the streams.

AUGUST: Consider landscape modifications to help your yard retain excess rainwater and prevent runoff. Redirect all down spouts which drain onto a paved surface and storm sewers to flow into a rain barrel, rain garden, mulched bed or

grassy areas. Minimize impervious surfaces such as concrete walkways or patios. Replace them with pavers or gardens. This also is a good month to plan for your fall plants and to think of slow release, natural fertilizers.

Rain Gardens - A beautiful Contribution

Rain gardens are planted in areas designed to soak up rain water, which drains from a roof or other impervious surface. Rain gardens allow significantly more water to soak into the ground than conventional patches of grass and encourage homeowners to redirect stormwater from hard surfaces. Rain gardens offer many environmental benefits to communities. They increase the amount of stormwater that recharges to groundwater, reducing downstream flooding and erosion problems. They also filter pollutants from stormwater that washes off of roofs, lawns and paved areas. Rain gardens provide an attractive habitat for birds, butterflies and many beneficial insects.

Rain gardens can be placed near either the house, to catch a roof runoff or set back from the residence to collect water from both the roof and the lawn. Select a sunny, gently sloped area with soil that will percolate. Do not place the rain garden under a large tree. Rule out locations with poorly draining soil types by digging a hole six inches deep, filling it with water and checking for complete drainage after 24 hours. Please place the garden at least 10 feet away and down sloped from any building so that infiltrating water does not hard the foundation.

A typical residential rain garden is 100 to 300 square feet. Place a longer side of the garden perpendicular to the slope and down spout of your home. Crescent and kidney-shaped gardens are recommended. Dig out and create a basin between four and eight inches deep and surround it with a berm. A rain garden more than eight inches deep might pond water too long.

Select native plants that tolerate both flooding and dry conditions and are suitable to the amount of sunlight, in that area. Most perennials will tolerate more sun and will do well in rain gardens. Don't forget new plants need one inch of water per week. Weeding is also important during the first two years. After the second year most gardens need minimal weeding and little or no watering. Then you can sit back and enjoy the beauty of your hard labor.