



Creating a Watershed-Friendly Yard

By: Chagrin River Watershed Partners

Spring is here and that means it's time to get outside and start enjoying your yard! Did you know that your yard can impact the health of the Chagrin River Watershed? A few easy landscaping techniques can go a long way to improving your own yard and helping our watershed.



Photo by CRWP

Reduce Your Lawn: Turfgrass lawns can't compete with the benefits of native plants. Turfgrass roots are short and absorb less than ten percent of the water that a natural woodland area can. Lawns also provide little in the way of habitat for important native animal species. You can help improve watershed health by replacing some of your turfgrass with native plants.

A native plant garden can be a beautiful and low-maintenance addition to your yard. Native plant species have adapted to local conditions and have long, intricate root systems that improve soil quality and absorb more water, which helps to filter out pollutants. These root systems also provide stability in the soil, helping to prevent erosion and improve drainage issues. Above ground, native plantings provide habitat for birds, bees, butterflies, and other native wildlife.

Mow It Right: You can improve the quality of your lawn by following a few simple guidelines. Use sharp blades and cut the grass to 3-4 inches. Leaving grass longer helps prevent disease and improves the health of your lawn. Studies show mowing your lawn to a height of 4 inches prevents crabgrass as effectively as a chemical herbicide. After you mow, leave the clippings on the lawn to provide a natural fertilizer.

Build a Rain Garden: Rain gardens are designed to soak up stormwater runoff from lawns and impervious surfaces. These bowl-shaped gardens work by capturing and slowly draining water through a network of native plant roots and amended soil, filtering out pollutants that can end up in local waterways. Rain gardens can also effectively reduce localized flooding issues on your property and create beautiful habitat for native pollinators. Before any work is performed on your property, be sure you are aware of and comply with any local ordinances.



Photo by CRWP

Pick Up Pet Waste: Dogs may be our best friends, but their waste is not watershed friendly. Pet waste can contain bacteria and excessive nutrients. Rain can wash those pollutants into ditches and drains, sending those contaminants into creeks and streams where they can harm aquatic habitat. Pick up and bag all pet waste on and off your property and dispose of it properly in the trash.

These simple practices will not only help keep our watershed healthy, but make your property look great too! For more information about these practices and other landscaping solutions that you can use to improve the quality of our water, please visit Chagrin River Watershed Partners' (CRWP) website at <https://crwp.org/landscaping-solutions/>.