

# Conservation News

Environmental News and Information from the City of Melbourne Utilities Department

## Managing runoff in the rainy season

By Tara Killen. UF Summer Intern

*It's back.* And I don't mean summer. The rainy season is finally upon us, which means two things. One, our afternoons are going to be filled with ominous thunderclouds and unpredictable showers. And two, those storm drains are going to be working overtime, filled with lots of rain and, unfortunately, pollution. However, you can be environmentally conscious and help mitigate runoff pollution. With only a few simple, summer-smart tips you'll be ready for the rain.

The first inch of runoff from a storm generally carries 90 percent of the pollution. And even if you don't use pesticides or fertilizers on your yard or lawn, that doesn't mean you're in the clear. The storm drains in your area lead directly to the closest body of water, which may be the Indian River Lagoon. Pet waste left in your yard, tire-wear and oil on your driveway, and yard clippings not disposed of properly all contribute to the



*This Melbourne home uses mulch and native plants, providing drought tolerance and greatly reducing the need for fertilizers and pesticides.*

pollution of our waterways.

With so many showers this time of year, it is important to pay attention to your lawn watering habits. Lawns only need watering every three to five days in the spring and summer. However, a hearty rain can eliminate the need for watering for up to two weeks. Connect a rain shut-off device to your irrigation system. It will automatically turn off the system

when it detects a certain amount of rain.

When Mother Nature decides to hold the rain and let you accomplish some yard work, make sure you place yard waste at the curb for collection without blocking any storm drains. The waste will be picked up and some of it turned into mulch. It is available free of charge from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday, at the Sarno Landfill, located at 3379 Sarno Road. For information, call 255-4366. Mulch in your yard can be used to retain moisture and control weeds. Using mulch, bricks, flagstones, gravel or other porous surfaces in your yard helps absorb runoff into the ground before it reaches storm drains.

Follow these simple suggestions and you'll have a beautiful and healthy yard. But more importantly, you'll be helping to preserve our fragile environment for many more years of enjoyment. Check out the accompanying box for more helpful tips.

### Helpful tips to prepare for the rainy season

- ◆ Try not to fertilize when rain is expected. It will only be washed away into storm drains.
- ◆ Use pesticides only when needed and just on affected areas, not the entire lawn.
- ◆ Bury your pet's waste, place it in a bag and throw it away or flush it down the toilet.
- ◆ Save grass for areas where children or pets play. Use mulch or a ground cover in other areas.
- ◆ Direct downspouts and gutters to drain onto the lawn, plant beds or containment areas where rain will soak into the soil.
- ◆ Use native plants that are acclimated to excessive rain or drought. Then group plants according to similar water needs.
- ◆ Have your car washed professionally or wash it on the grass so the soap and grime don't flow into the storm drains.
- ◆ Always obey water restrictions. Irrigation is only allowed between the hours of 4 p.m. and 10 a.m.



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# Hurricane season readiness — yard waste cleanup and preparation

This summer's daily afternoon thunderstorms are but a small glimpse of the power of a hurricane or tropical storm. The powerful winds they generate can turn dead tree limbs and other yard debris into missiles that can damage your property.

Before a storm threatens is the best time to prepare your yard. It is important to remove any dead limbs and branches from trees, and trim them back if needed. Also, check for and remove trash and debris from your property. It could get caught in high winds and inflict injury on people or damage property. This sort of yard debris could also get caught in storm drains, ditches and canals and increase the potential for flooding.

Follow these rules when preparing yard waste for collection:

- ◆ Yard waste must be placed within four feet of the curb between 5 p.m. on the day before collection and 6:30 a.m. on collection day.
- ◆ Yard waste is from the grass, plants, shrubs and trees growing in your yard. Nothing else can be mixed with your yard waste. Any excess dirt must be removed before it is placed at the curb.
- ◆ Yard waste must be cut to the proper

lengths and placed in containers for collection. Containers must be plastic or metal and must not exceed 32 gallons in capacity. In addition, containers may not weigh more than 50 pounds when placed at the curb for collection.

- ◆ Branches must be cut in lengths of four feet or less for branches six inches in diameter, and two feet or less for branches that exceed six inches in diameter. All branches, leaves, twigs, clippings, seeds, berries, etc., must be placed in containers.
  - ◆ Yard waste cannot be placed in plastic bags for collection.
  - ◆ When placing yard waste at the curb for collection, do not place yard waste in or on drains, canals, ditches or in any manner that obstructs drainage. Also, do not place yard waste in the street, on sidewalks or in a manner that creates a physical and/or visual obstruction for drivers, bicycle riders or pedestrians.
  - ◆ Do not obstruct or conceal fire hydrants with yard waste.
- If you have any questions, Melbourne residents can call the City's Solid Waste/ Recycling Division at 953-6302. If outside of the City, call your local municipality.

## Water quality report coming



Toward the middle to latter part of June, Melbourne water customers will receive the City's annual Consumer

Confidence Water Quality Reporter in the mail.

The report covers water quality testing performed during 2002 and explains the City's water in relation to state and federal standards.

If you do not receive a copy of the report or if you would like to request additional copies, please call the City's Utilities Administration Division at (321) 674-5761 or send an e-mail request to [jwilster@melbourneflorida.org](mailto:jwilster@melbourneflorida.org). There will also be copies available at the City Hall Utility Billing Desk at 900 E. Strawbridge Avenue and online at the City's web site ([www.melbourneflorida.org](http://www.melbourneflorida.org)).

## City seeking utility customers' assistance to ensure security

Using the Neighborhood "Crime Watch" idea, the City of Melbourne is asking utility customers to be on the lookout for any suspicious activity at Melbourne's remote water and wastewater facilities.

"We can't assign personnel to all of our remote locations 24 hours a day, seven days a week," explained Utilities Director Bob Klaproth. "This is a way to get the help of customers who live in the areas to



*Elevated water storage tank in Indialantic.*

keep a close eye on the facilities."

These facilities would include elevated water tanks such as the one pictured, ground storage tanks, pumping stations, lift stations and the like.

While you are driving in your neighborhood or out for a walk and pass these structures, you can look for anything out of the ordinary. This might include unlocked gates or people at

the structure who look as if they do not belong.

If you see anything suspicious, please call the Utilities Administration Division at 674-5761, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. If it is after 4 p.m. or on a weekend or holiday, call the emergency night repair phone number, which is 255-4622, or call the Melbourne Police Department at 409-3317.

"With all that has been going on in the world we believe many people would appreciate the opportunity to assist us in our security efforts," Klaproth said.

### Water Conservation Tip

Aim to keep showers under five minutes and install low-flow showerheads. The older the showerhead, the more water it uses. New models deliver about 2.5 gallons per minute, while older fixtures can deliver as much as eight gallons per minute.