

Preventing Storm Water Pollution

Understand What “Biodegradable” Isn’t: Household cleaning products labeled biodegradable do eventually break down, but not before they can be deadly to fish and wildlife. It is not safe for aquatic life right out of the bucket. Keep them out of storm drains, and rinse containers to indoor sinks before disposing of them.

Prevent pollutant runoff: Home, garden and yard care products caught in the rain or irrigation water can easily be transported to storm drains. Store them inside, use these products minimally or use less toxic alternatives. See the [Sonoma County Waste Management Agency](#) web site for more information. Apply in dry weather and avoid watering after use.

Be responsible for your help: When contractors, landscapers, painters, and others work in and around your home, inquire about their disposal practices. Construction, paint and landscaping waste should never be dumped in storm drains.

Go easy on the chemicals: The fewer harmful chemicals you have on hand, the less potential for accidents. Buy only what you need. Dispose of unused products at a [Household Toxics Waste Facility](#).

Beware of grease: Cooking and household grease is harmful to creeks and clogs the sewer system causing sewage backups. Seal cold grease in a bag or other container and dispose of it in the trash.

Clean up after pets: Pet feces left on the curb or street gets carried by rain into storm drains and creeks, where it can cause harmful water-borne diseases. Always dispose of it in the trash.

Watch where dirty water flows: If you’re dumping soapy water, bleach, or latex paint, do it at a inside sink where it goes to the sewage treatment plant. Latex paint can also be disposed of at the [Household Toxics Waste Facility](#) or be allowed to dry in its bucket and placed in the garbage. Oil-based paints must always be disposed of at the [Household Toxics Waste Facility](#).

Car washing: As for cars, they’re best washed at a car wash facility, where water is recycled or routed to the sanitary sewer system. If you must wash your car at home, go light on the soap, and direct wash and rinse water to a soil, lawn or gravel area rather than the storm drain.