



JEFFCO H₂O NEWS

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Well Behaved Wildness



It might not sound logical, but these two extremes really can play well together. Creating a [sustainable landscape](#) can keep your yard within your Neighborhood Association's requirements while still offering you all the benefits of native plants, grasses and trees. The key to achieving both is keeping your yard neat, and making sure your plant choices look intentional, not overgrown or random. The rewards come in the fact that an intentionally "wild" yard requires less care and maintenance than more traditional landscapes. So what exactly are those rewards? Let's look at the numbers! A traditionally landscaped yard generally includes turf, and lots of it. Americans manage approximately 40 million acres of lawn, and apply more than 100 million tons of fertilizer and 80 million pounds of pesticides annually. A yard with 10,000 square feet of turf requires an average of 10,000 gallons of water per summer to stay green. Homeowners spend an entire work week per year pushing a power mower which uses a quart of gas per hour. When grass clippings are bagged rather than mulched, they consume 25% to 40% of valuable landfill space each year. Opting for a more sustainable landscape can help diminish the time, cost and natural resources needed to maintain your yard. Reducing the [amount of turf](#) in your yard is the biggest step you can take toward creating a sustainable landscape. This can be done in phases, as time and budget allow. Creating natural areas and installing native plants that will attract [desirable bugs](#), birds, and other wildlife to your yard will further support your landscape's sustainability. While this process will require that you cultivate a little tolerance for imperfection, you will eventually establish a system of integrated pest management in your yard which will require less of your intervention. The long term savings realized by using fewer chemicals, less water, and less fuel can more than make up for the initial cost of rethinking and installing the landscaping. Redefining overall landscaping goals and gradually shifting toward sustainability will continue to provide rewards in terms of environmental quality, landscape sustainability, improved aesthetics, and overall vitality for your property.

To Bee or Not to Bee?



And that is a great big question! Honey bees are disappearing worldwide at an alarming rate and have been for a number of years. These low profile workaholics are singlehandedly responsible for pollinating \$10 billion worth of crops in the US each year. Without honey bees, some of the most common foods at the grocery store would immediately disappear: apples, almonds, pumpkins, cucumbers, watermelon, avocados, blueberries, oranges, peaches, onions. Other crops, and meat from the livestock that depend upon them for food, would become very scarce and expensive. To illustrate the impact that no honey bees would have on what is offered for sale on its produce shelves, Whole Foods Market in Providence, RI [removed](#) 237 of its normal 453 products. But it's not just crops that are dependent upon pollinators - more than 85% of all the world's plant species require pollinators to exist. These plants are a source of food for insects and animals, and their decline would have a drastic negative effect on life on earth. Some [major food producers](#) are stepping up to do their part in informing people of this potential crisis. So what is causing honey bees to disappear? Changes in agricultural and landscaping practices where we choose monoculture (one type of crop or large areas of one plant like a lawn) versus diverse species, the development and use of a class of insecticides called neonicotinoids, and recent pollinator health challenges together have had a negative impact on pollinator habitat and have played a role in bee [Colony Collapse Disorder](#). Intentionally planting some pollinator friendly native plants in your landscape to encourage honey bees and other pollinators to visit your yard will help support your area's pollinator population. Just make sure to avoid buying plants pretreated with systemic pesticides and using this type of chemical on your 'bee friendly' plants. When purchasing pesticides, always choose the least toxic option and look for the [bee advisory box](#) to learn about any application restrictions or potential hazard to bees that particular product might present.

What's Happening?

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day - April 29 - Flushing medication can harm water quality in streams. Click [HERE](#) for drop off locations.

Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Seminar Series - Birmingham Botanical Gardens - This free series of seminars starting in May and running through October offers fresh and practical ideas and techniques for your landscape and garden. Dates and topics will soon be available at [bbgardens.org](#).

Do Dah Day - May 20 - Rhodes and Caldwell Parks, Birmingham - Check out [dodahday.org](#) for information about this fun, family friendly event.

Rain Barrel Workshop - June 17 - Learn how to build a rain barrel or purchase one to take home, and start enjoying the benefits that storing and using rainwater can bring. Preregistration required by June 9. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Up On the Roof



It's hard to believe that with all of the recent rainstorms we are still under a [drought](#) here in central Alabama. Unfortunately, rain totals are still behind what is considered normal for this time of year and as of March, most of the state still remains in abnormally dry to drought conditions. Being mindful of how you use water, finding ways to [reduce water use](#) both inside and out, and implementing ways to maximize the impact of the rain that we do receive are especially important at this time. When it does rain, having a rain barrel in place to collect rain water from your roof can result in a surprising amount of water each time it rains. This stored rain water can be used to supplement irrigating your garden beds between rain events. A 1,000 square foot roof can yield more than 600 gallons of water for every 1 inch of rain that falls on it. We average 55 inches of rain per year in Alabama, so that means that there is potential to collect 33,000 gallons of rainwater running off from your roof! It also helps to be smart about irrigation: calibrate and time sprinklers, and consider using [drip irrigation](#) to reduce evaporation and runoff. Providing opportunities for rain water to soak into your landscape rather than run off into the storm drainage system also can help alleviate some of the effects of drought. In addition to preventing stormwater runoff, another important reason for allowing rain water to soak into the ground is its necessary role in recharging [aquifers](#). These large underground water storage areas feed springs and streams, and help shore up large areas of land thereby preventing the formation of [sinkholes](#).

Wholly Cr@p



If you've ever had this delightful experience, you know just how annoying and disgusting it can be. But not picking up after your pet isn't just rude - it creates a serious health hazard for your family and your community. Contrary to what some people believe, dog waste is definitely not a fertilizer for your yard. Dog waste carries a variety of bacteria, viruses, pathogens and parasites. A single gram (0.0022 pounds) of dog waste contains about 23 million fecal coliform bacteria. Exposure to this bacteria can give people a nasty case of intestinal issues which could even be life threatening. It is estimated that there are 150,000 dogs living as pets in Jefferson County which collectively produce 38 tons of waste each day! When that dog poo just sits on the ground, the eggs from parasites such as roundworms are deposited in the soil where they can live for years. This is especially concerning if you and your family members play, garden, or even walk barefoot in the same areas. The best way to handle dog waste is to [bag it, tie it and trash it as it occurs](#). Dark colored plastic bags are the best choice for disposing of pet waste since the heat generated inside the bag kills parasites and pathogens.

For unincorporated Jefferson County: Call 325.5792 to report suspected water pollution - Call 582.6555 to report illegal dumping

If you have questions, comments, or want to schedule a presentation for your community or organization in unincorporated Jefferson County, email lyn.diclemente@jccal.org or call 325.8741.