



# JEFFCO H<sub>2</sub>O NEWS

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## Night Life



In spite of its peaceful appearance, there's a lot going on in the garden at night. During the day, plants are busy absorbing sunlight to synthesize foods from carbon dioxide and water. As the sun sets, plants use stored glucose for energy in the absence of sunlight. Some plants such as jasmine, four o'clocks, gardenia, honeysuckle and evening primrose release fragrance at night to attract the night shift pollinators such as moths, beetles and bats. While they may not be growing in your yard, the health and presence of night time pollinators in our region is crucial to the reproduction of many plants, including peaches, mint, and thyme. One modern amenity which greatly reduces pollinator activity is outdoor lighting. While outdoor lighting in public and commercial areas can be important for safety reasons, it often is inefficient or poorly placed. Too bright and too much outdoor lighting greatly reduces the activity of these crucial pollinators, and some studies have shown that this reduction limits the availability of food sources for daytime pollinators.

Some municipalities are revising their [lighting policies](#) to reduce its impact on pollinators and other wildlife. At home, giving your landscape lighting a tune up to reduce blue light emissions and not keeping it on all night can create conditions that will attract night time pollinators. Consider embracing the night and create a garden which is meant to enjoy at night. Choose native plants with white or light colored flowers, and silvery leaves and bark. These plants are often less showy and are easily overlooked in the daylight, but become vivid focal points in the moonlight. [Moonlight gardens](#) can be perfect spots for entertaining or spending some quiet time. A path enhanced with light colored pavers and a white bench can complete your moonlight garden. Before planning and planting a garden to enjoy in the moonlight, be sure to test your soil and select the right plants for your landscape conditions.

## For the Birds



Bird watching is one of the most popular hobbies in the US. It is estimated that about 45 million Americans watch birds around their homes and away from home. While one way that people attract birds to their yards is by setting up bird feeders and water sources, planning and planting a garden that will attract wild birds is a long term way to entice a wide variety of species to your yard. Studies also show that [gardening to attract birds](#) rather than exclusively using feeders reduces the spread of disease among your feathered friends. Native plants are the preferred choice for attracting birds for several reasons. They can require less care than other choices because they already are adapted to the precipitation, hot humid summers, and soil conditions of our area. They also thrive without the use of fertilizers or pesticides, making them a safer choice. [Audubon](#) has a tool for identifying native plants which will attract specific bird species to your yard. Having frequent avian visitors to your yard also can reduce the number of pesky insects in the garden. Once you [identify](#) the insect culprits that are causing your problem, you can plan your garden to attract [birds](#) that like to feast on those bugs.

## What's Happening

**Birmingham Botanical Gardens Spring Plant Sale, April 13 - 15 - Brookwood Village** - Visit [bbgardens.org](#) to learn more.

**Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day - April 21** - Residents of unincorporated Jefferson County, the City of Bessemer, and the Town of Silvan Springs can bring their Household Hazardous Waste to 1205 15th Avenue North, Bessemer, from 8:30 am - 11 am for proper disposal. Zip codes will be checked to verify residency. Click [HERE](#) for a list of items accepted.

**Drug Take Back Day - April 28** - Safely dispose of unwanted prescription drugs at one of [these 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 are available [HERE](#).

**Do Dah Day - May 19** - Whether you have a pet or not, come on out to this [fun event](#) for the whole family!

**Rain Barrel Workshop - June 16 - Rain Barrel Workshop** - 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. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

## Green with Envy



In most neighborhoods, there is that one lawn that is beautifully maintained, lushly green and impeccably manicured. Often, that homeowner spends nearly every waking hour in the yard, tending to the tiniest detail to achieve near perfection. While some people just love spending time in the yard, many simply do not have the time or the desire to do so, but still would like to have a pretty lawn. This paradox often leads to the purchase and overuse of all types of fertilizers and weed killers in the quest for effortless perfection. Yard chemicals can be very helpful if used and applied correctly, but can be a source of water pollution if guidelines are not followed. And using too much or the wrong type of yard chemicals is a waste of both time and money. So is it possible to have a nice looking lawn that is stormwater friendly without investing a huge amount of time, effort, and expense? Click [HERE](#) to read what James Horton, Director of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and well-known turfgrass expert, says about the care and maintenance of residential lawns.

## Kid (and Pet) Friendly Yards



Spring means the beginning of lots of fun times playing in the yard with kids and pets. And that brings to mind safety first. Installing a fence is a practical way to make sure that both kids and pets stay in the yard and unwanted four legged visitors stay out. Consider including a fence window or other way for your pet to peek through the fence to reduce barking. Check to see that your landscape does not contain plants that are harmful to your family and [pets](#). Some of the most popular landscape plants such as azaleas, calla lilies, daffodils, and holly bushes (berries), are toxic to children and pets if they are ingested. Plants that contain thorns or prickly parts can cause harm. Dogs enjoy an area that is ok to dig in, and a soft shady area to relax in. Dogs also need a path that is suitable for running and patrolling; if your dog already has created his own path, try to follow it in your landscape planning. A wooden post can serve for territory marking and provide an alternative to other elements in the yard. Minimize paved areas, and use non-skid surfaces on walkways or stairs to help prevent little skinned knees. Pick up and properly dispose of [pet waste](#) on a daily basis. Pet waste contains billions of harmful pathogens and bacteria which are dangerous for humans. Avoid using yard chemicals. If you must use yard chemicals, make sure you purchase the least toxic choice, apply according to package directions, and properly dispose of or store any extra.

## Watershed Spotlight



The 2018 Stormwater Calendar highlights three venues during the spring and summer months which not only are great places to visit but which are also playing a big role in contributing to improving our [watersheds](#) and water quality. The venues featured April - June are located in the Shades Creek, Valley Creek, and Village Creek Watersheds. April highlights the [Birmingham Botanical Gardens](#). This 67.5 acre property is bursting with stunning plants, flowers, trees, water features and paths. More than 350,000 people visit the gardens each year to stroll through the grounds or participate in a workshop or other program. The month of May features [Railroad Park](#), otherwise known as Birmingham's living room. This 19 acre greenspace in the heart of Birmingham celebrates the city's industrial and artistic heritage with year round events. June highlights [East Lake Park](#), home to 33 species of wild birds and a variety of fish. Part of Birmingham's park system, this 60 acre property is a perfect place to take a stroll, cast a line, or kick back and relax. Pick up your copy of the 2018 Stormwater Calendar in Room 260 of the Jefferson County Courthouse located in downtown Birmingham.