



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

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## Perfectly Imperfect Gardening



The ancient Japanese philosophy of wabi sabi finds beauty in and appreciation of the imperfect aspects of life and the objects within it. In the garden, this includes an acceptance of the nuances and changes in the natural landscape that aren't always orderly and pristine. This could mean keeping plants in a favorite container that has a crack in it or showcasing mossy discolored rocks. Choosing and incorporating native plants which have unusual textures, shapes, or other characteristics and allowing them to self seed and grow naturally can bring interest and whimsy to your design. While this practice is by no means 'hands off', it is a more [tolerant](#) approach to landscaping. Enjoying plants that billow past the edge of the garden bed or incorporating more natural areas instead of turf can give a whole [new look](#) to your yard. Often this style of gardening means the use of fewer yard care products and the addition of more opportunities for rain water to soak into the ground. Including objects in the landscape made of materials like iron or wood that will weather or otherwise change with the passage of time also can add to the humble and imperfect vibe that wabi sabi embraces. Remember, there are no mistakes in gardening, just experiments! Intentionally incorporating a more relaxed approach can provide a fresh look while also protecting water quality.

## Veggielicious



To many southerners, summer means juicy tomato sandwiches and large amounts of other fresh vegetables all season long. While most grocery stores have a staggering amount of produce and many communities have farmer's markets which offer a great variety of choices, the home garden is still the ultimate source for the freshest veggies. If you did not plant a vegetable garden this spring, now is the [perfect time](#) to get a garden established to enjoy a fall harvest. A garden is only as good as its soil, so make sure to do a [soil test](#) prior to planting. And no matter what time of year a garden is planted, pest management is a concern. [Companion planting](#) can improve the quality of your harvest while lure plants or [trap crops](#) are a non-chemical way of keeping pests at bay. This technique tricks pests away from the vegetables you are growing and minimizes the amount of insecticides needed. If you find that you must use an insecticide, be sure to choose the least toxic option and always carefully read and follow package directions.

## What's Happening

**National Night Out - August 7** - The Jefferson County [Sheriff's Office](#) will host National Night Out in two locations: Center Point Courthouse and Sylvan Springs Ballpark. The event is focused on creating a partnership between neighborhoods and law enforcement to enhance safety and crime prevention.

**SepticSmart Week - September 17 - 21** - Is it time to service your [septic tank](#)? Regular [maintenance](#) is important in protecting your family's health and your investment. Regularly checking your system also prevents poorly functioning septic tanks from polluting local creeks and streams.

**Brown Bag Seminar Series - April - September** - This series of [seminars](#) is packed with information you can use. Free, no registration required.

**All Bugs Good and Bad** - Got pests? Tune in to this free [webinar](#) series for information about identifying and managing pests around your home and yard.

## Beware the Invaders!



Sometimes plants can become too much of a good thing. That is particularly true of plants that are not native to an area but are introduced to produce a certain effect or to solve a problem. Often these plants are very useful in their native climate and conditions, but become invasive when planted in an area such as Alabama where the growing season is longer and winters are more temperate. An example of this phenomenon is kudzu. This tenacious Asian vine was introduced into the US at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. During the dust storms of the 1930s, farmers were encouraged to plant kudzu to reduce soil erosion. And we all know how that turned out here in the south! Invasive plants are called that because they respond to conditions favorable for them to literally grow beyond their normal parameters and consequently take over other plants. Invasives are such a problem in the US that there even is a [website](#) devoted to them. Besides kudzu, there are a number of invasive plants right here in Jefferson County which we all should be concerned about. One of these species, [wild taro](#), is spreading around our area and establishing itself in many new locations! Click [HERE](#) to read a great article from the Cahaba River Society about the effects of this invasive species and what you can do to control its spread.

## Running Smoothly



Now that we are in the midst of summer here in Alabama, chances are your lawn and garden equipment have been frequently used. To keep everything working at an optimum level, it makes sense to do a mid-season [maintenance check](#). If you changed the oil, replaced the air filter and sharpened the blade on the lawnmower at the beginning of the season, give them a quick check to see if they might need additional service. Always collect and [recycle](#) used motor oil; use absorbent material to soak up any spills and sweep into a dust pan for disposal in the trash. If you like to wash off your equipment after use, be sure to do so on a grassy area of your yard. This allows the wash water to soak into the ground rather than run off your property and enter the stormdrain system. This also applies if you hand wash your [car](#) at home. In addition to the detergents and waxes used during cleaning, cars have petroleum, heavy metals, and other pollutants on their surfaces which can pollute creeks and streams. For this reason, commercial car washes are required to properly manage wash water.

## Conservation Watering



During the long hot days of summer, there are a few things you can do to maximize the efficiency of [watering your lawn and garden](#) as well as save money in the process. First and foremost, choose native plants that are well adapted to our climate and conditions. Add some organic matter such as compost or other amendment to the soil. Organic material naturally assists in water absorption. Apply several inches of mulch to garden beds. This top layer of organic matter helps decrease evaporation plus it makes your yard look neat and clean. Watering early in the morning reduces the water lost to evaporation and gives plants some time to uptake the water in cooler temperatures. Use the right amount of water for the plants and turf in your yard. Watering must reach the roots in order to be effective. Choose watering techniques such as drip irrigation which maximize efficiency and minimize runoff and evaporation. Consider installing a rain barrel to collect and re-use rainwater. Utilize ground cover and shade trees wherever possible to keep the landscape cooler.

## Watershed Spotlight



Even though half the year is already over, the 2018 Stormwater Calendar is packed with information that you still can use. The calendar highlights three venues during the summer and fall months which not only are great places to visit but also play a big role in contributing to improving our [watersheds](#) and water quality. The venues featured July - September are located in the Turkey, Valley, Shades and Village Creek Watersheds. July highlights the [Turkey Creek Nature Preserve](#). This 466 acre preserve boasts some of the most unique beauty found in the southeast and is home to 7 federally protected species. The month of August features the [Seven Springs Ecoscape](#). This beautiful serene park is a habitat for the endangered watercress darter, and the elements installed throughout the park help protect water quality in its natural spring. September highlights [Ruffner Mountain](#), having 1038 acres of lush native forest and wildlife habitat filled with trails and history, nestled in the midst of downtown Birmingham.

**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](mailto:lyn.diclemente@jccal.org) or call 325.8741.*