

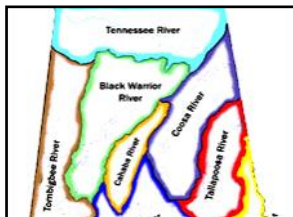


JEFFCO H₂O NEWS

ISSUE 20 - SUMMER/FALL 2017

The Ins and Outs of a Watershed | Up, Down, Re, E, Pre - What's it All Mean??? | What's Happening | Hanging Around | Too Much of a Good Thing

The Ins and Outs of a Watershed



Graphic: Alabama Water Watch

A basin is a large area of land drained by a river and all its tributaries. Basins are made up of watersheds. A [watershed](#) is a land area whose elevation causes water to flow to a common waterway. Here in Jefferson County, we have two main drainage basins: the Black Warrior River Basin and the Cahaba River Basin which are separated by the Red Mountain Divide, a southern extension of the Appalachian Mountains and the Cumberland Plateau. Within these two major basins are ten primary watersheds located in Jefferson County: Black Warrior River, Cahaba River, Five Mile Creek, Gurley Creek, Little Cahaba River, Locust Fork, Shades Creek, Turkey Creek, Valley Creek, and Village Creek. The Cahaba River is 194 miles long; the Black Warrior River, formed when the Locust Fork and Mulberry Fork converge, is 178 miles long. The Black Warrior and Cahaba Basins drain into the Mobile Basin which empties into the Gulf of Mexico. The takeaway from this is that everyone lives both upstream and downstream from someone else, and each of us has a direct impact on the [quality of water](#) in our rivers, lakes, creeks and streams. We are fortunate to have local residents, watershed based advocacy groups, and [statewide organizations](#) which play an active role in protecting our waterways. Consider getting involved by joining a watershed group, becoming a certified water monitor, or organizing a roadside litter cleanup in your community. Remember—you have the power to protect your watershed and its waterways through your everyday actions and choices!

Up, Down, Re, E, Pre - What's it All Mean???



Recycling is the process of collecting and processing materials which otherwise would be thrown away as trash and turning them into reusable material or products. But at 4.5 pounds of trash per day for every American, we generate much more trash than we recycle. The EPA estimates that while 75% of America's trash is recyclable, we only recycle about 30%. So it makes sense that our country's biggest export is trash! China, one of our biggest customers, buys much of what we throw away, reprocesses it, and sells it back to US manufacturers. And then we buy new stuff, throw it away, sell our trash . . . you get the idea. But in 2013, China passed 'Green Fence' restrictions which prohibit importing low quality recyclable plastics which often means that more US plastics wind up in landfills. Currently 13% of our solid waste is plastics. We use 50 billion plastic water bottles per year, but 69% of these are discarded as trash. Of the plastic that is recycled, US manufacturers currently are using less than 10% recycled plastic in producing new bottles. Some recycled plastics are upcycled to make products with more value than the original product such as [clothing](#) made from plastic bottles. Other materials are downcycled to produce entirely different products with less value and recycling potential than the original product. Many plastics and some paper fall into this category. But the fastest growing waste stream in the US is electronic or e-waste. Americans generate more e-waste than any other country in the world, discarding 9.4 million tons of electronics annually but recycling just 12.5%. E-cycling recovers usable materials from discarded electronics such as plastic, metal and wire, and valuable elements such as gold, silver, palladium, and copper which all can be reprocessed for use in new electronic devices. Responsible e-cycling also properly handles toxic materials found in electronics such as lead, cadmium, mercury and arsenic which can leach from landfills and pollute groundwater. While most domestic recycling companies handle e-waste in a responsible manner, some of our e-waste is shipped overseas for processing, and unfortunately not all countries regulate and enforce the proper processing of e-waste. Locally, [recycal.org](#) offers e-cycling as well as many other recycling options, and is a great resource for hard to recycle items. It's also possible to reduce the need for recycling by choosing products which either can be reused or will decrease the amount of waste generated. Precycling is making those choices which have some degree of sustainability or upfront waste reduction such as purchasing reusable rather than single use or disposable products; buying food, cleaning products, and other consumables in bulk to reduce packaging waste; or choosing items that can be repaired or refurbished rather than discarded. Reducing the amount of waste we generate means less litter, trash and hazardous materials potentially carried by rain into waterways. Less energy used for manufacturing and transportation means less air pollution deposited in waterways. Putting a little effort into choosing wisely, reducing waste, reusing materials, recycling whenever possible, and conserving natural resources can have a big impact on improving our future on planet earth.

What's Happening

7th Annual Valley Creek Cleanup - August 19 - Help clean up [Valley Creek](#) 8:30 am - 12 noon; multiple roadside cleanup locations. Free t-shirt and hot dog lunch.

SepticSmart Week - September 18 - 23 - Is it time to service your [septic tank](#)? Regular [maintenance](#) is important in protecting your family's health and your investment.

Brown Bag Seminar Series - Birmingham Botanical Gardens, 2612 Lane Park Road, Birmingham. This free [seminar](#) series continues through October.

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

Hanging Around



With clever choices for small spaces or limited time to devote to gardening, trends like container gardening and vertical gardens have provided some interesting and beautiful options that also deliver the stormwater friendly benefits of reduced runoff and modest fertilizer needs. Kokedama, a form of Japanese bonsai that dates back to the 1600s, is currently a popular and stormwater savvy way to grow and display plants while adding a big dose of pizzazz to your outdoor landscape or indoor décor. Literally meaning "moss ball", this style is frequently used for houseplants, but also can be used for outdoor plants including small shrubs and trees. The technique does not use a pot or other container in which to grow the plant. The roots of the plant are surrounded by a clay and potting soil mix, wrapped in dry moss, and the resulting ball is bound with string. Traditionally, the finished kokedama is either suspended with string or is placed in a flat or clear container to show off its shape. Watering needs will vary depending upon where the kokedama is displayed. Place the kokedama in a container or sink filled with room temperature water, fully submerge the moss ball and allow it to soak for 10—30 minutes or until it is fully saturated. Gently squeeze out any excess water and allow the kokedama to drain until water is no longer dripping from it before returning it to its original location. Many kokedama appreciate misting between soakings. While kokedama are available commercially, [making your own](#) can be a fun and easy to do project. As with any gardening endeavor, choosing the right plant for the location and conditions it will experience is important to a successful outcome.

Too Much of a Good Thing



Water is essential to life, but watering too much or too little can be the source of many common plant problems. You can have a healthier landscape, save money, and conserve precious water by learning to give your lawn and garden just what they need and nothing more! The type and condition of the soil in your yard has a lot to do with watering efficiency as well as the availability of nutrients for plants. Enriching your soil with compost will help water to more easily absorb and mulching garden beds will enable those areas to better retain water in the soil and reduce both runoff and evaporation. When [watering your landscape](#), make sure you water deeply. By doing so, you will be able to reduce watering frequency. As with many other things, timing is everything! Water early in the morning to reduce evaporation and maximize the amount of water that actually soaks into the ground. Lawns are the biggest consumer of water, and require about 2" of water per week to look lush and green. It's better to water lawns once every few days rather than every day, since less frequent deep watering encourages turf to establish a more efficient root system and greater drought tolerance. Most plants do best if their soil is allowed to partially dry out between waterings. Unless the weather is exceptionally hot and dry, trees and shrubs usually don't need much watering once their roots are fully established. Choose native plants whenever possible since they are well adapted to local conditions and once established can thrive on rainfall alone. Using drip irrigation systems or soaker hoses can reduce water use by as much as 50% compared with sprinklers. If you use a sprinkler system, make sure that it is calibrated, timed, and the heads are directed away from paved areas to prevent runoff.

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.