Disposal of Pet Waste

Safe Methods of Pet Waste Disposal

» Flushing - As long as the droppings are not mixed with other materials, pet waste could be flushed down the toilet.

» Tossing - Pet waste should be picked up with a plastic bag and put into the garbage if local law allows it.

» Burying - Pet waste should be buried in a hole 1' deep. Keep out of vegetable gardens and compost piles.

Let pets be part of the solution to water pollution:

» Keep pets and farm animals away from streams, ponds, or lakes.

» Keep pet waste off of sidewalks, streets, and gutters.

» Use the "Long Grass Principle."

Long grass (~6+ inches) helps filter pollutants.

Large Animals

» Keep as much vegetation as possible between barns, corrals, etc., and any water body. High-use areas should be away from water bodies.

» Manure and bedding should be collected and stored out of the rain.

Household Hazardous Waste

Many towns and cities in Texas have designated facilities where residents can drop off hazardous waste items.

These materials should never be poured down the drain or disposed on the ground or in the storm drain system.

» Corrosive cleaners, Drain cleaner, Fluorescent light bulbs, Fuels (gasoline, propane, diesel), Paints, Pesticides, Pool chlorine and acid, Wood stains or varnishes.

Storage:

» Products should be kept in their original container and labels should be readable.

» Chemicals should stay in an upright position to avoid leaking.

» Products should never be mixed together, which can result in dangerous, even deadly, fumes.

» Chemicals should be kept in a cool, dry place out of the reach of children and pets.

Check the TCEQ Household Hazardous Waste web page (www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/hhw/contacts.html) for more information.

Home Septic System Care

*A foul odor isn't always the first sign of a malfunctioning septic system.*

A septic professional should be contacted if any of the following occur:

» Wastewater backing up into drains.

» Bright green, spongy grass on the drain field, even during dry weather.

» Pooling water or muddy soil around the septic system or in the basement.

» A strong odor around the septic tank and drain field.

Pumping is required if the bottom of the scum layer is within 6 inches of the bottom of the outlet, or if the top of the sludge layer is within 12 inches of the outlet.

TCEQ lists local government contacts regarding septic system requirements. www6.tceq.texas.gov/oars/.

The septic tank receives wastewater from the house (1). The system itself consists of a buried, water-tight septic tank, which allows solids to settle; (2) and a drain field, or soil absorption field (3). If the drain field is overloaded with too much liquid, it will flood, causing sewage to flow to the ground surface or create backups in toilets and sinks. Finally, the wastewater percolates into the soil, naturally removing harmful bacteria, viruses, and nutrients (4).

Water Smart Gardening
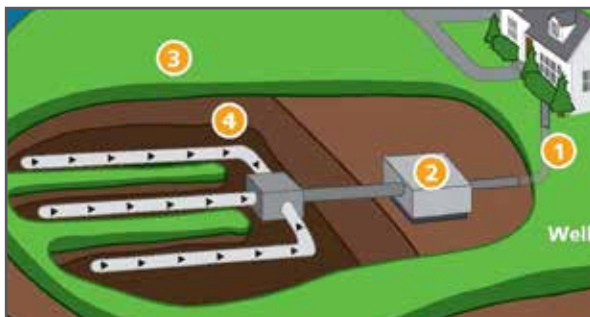
The design of landscapes to receive stormwater runoff from streets and other hard surfaces can help reduce soil erosion and protect the natural processes in the soil that break down pollutants.

Tip #1 - Nurture the Soil

Developing and maintaining healthy soil is an important part of reducing or eliminating the need for quick release fertilizers and pesticides.

- » Cover exposed soil with plants or mulch;
- » Fertilize with compost; and
- » Never mow more than one-third of the grass height.

Tip #2 - Select the Right Plants

Proper plant selection can reduce the need for synthetic pesticides and fertilizers.

- » Landscape using native plants: http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden/coastplants.html
- » Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Native Plant Recommended Species Collections, includes species recommended for South Texas: www.wildflower.org (click on Collections).

- » Choose the right turf grass to reduce fertilizer and water needs: Texas A&M, Ecological Turf Tips: http://galveston.agrilife.org/files/2011/05/L-5519-Turfgrass-Selection-for-Texas-6-2010.pdf.
- » Plan for Growth - Newly planted shrubs and perennials will need room to grow.

Tip #3 - Reduce Irrigation Use

- » Avoid water runoff from sprinklers and irrigation systems; and
- » Use efficient irrigation to reduce overspray, evaporation, and runoff

Tip #4 - Used Itegrated Pest Management

- » Encourage beneficial insects
- » Reduce or eliminate fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides

Rainwater Harvesting

Rain barrels and cisterns can be installed to capture stormwater runoff from rooftops and stored for later use in landscape irrigation.

Rain barrels and cisterns are appropriate for areas with the following characteristics:

- » Roof areas that drain to downspouts.
- » A level, firm surface to support a rain barrel(s) or cistern to prevent shifting or falling over. A full 55-gallon rain barrel will weigh over 400 lbs.
- » A landscaped area where the captured water can be used (and where it can be drained by gravity flow) should be located within a reasonable distance from the rain barrel(s).
- » A landscaped area or safe path to the storm drain system that can handle overflow.

Operation and Maintenance

After installing a rain barrel or cistern, these tips should be followed for long-term safety and functionality:

- » Gutters and gutter guards should be regularly checked to make sure debris is not entering the rainwater harvesting system.
- » Screens on the rain barrel or cistern

should be inspected to make sure debris is not collecting on the surface and that there are no holes allowing mosquitoes to enter the rain barrel. Inspect screens more frequently if there are trees that drop debris on the roof.

- » The inside of the rain barrel should be cleaned once a year to prevent buildup of debris. If debris cannot be removed by rinsing, vinegar or another nontoxic cleaner should be used.
- » Clean out debris from cisterns once a year.