

Spring Into Watershed Health



As temperatures climb and greenery fills our landscapes here in Northeast Ohio, many homeowners are eager to get back to landscaping. Now is the perfect time to think about how you would like your yard to look this year, along with any goals you may have. To protect our watershed, support wildlife and pollinators, and stop spending so much time and money on seasonal yard maintenance, consider implementing one or more of the following:

Install a Rain Barrel: <https://crwp.org/rain-barrels/>

Reduce your water use and stormwater runoff by installing a rain barrel or cistern on your property! Rain barrels capture water from your downspouts and store it for you to use later in your landscaping. Standard rain barrels can store about 50 gallons of water, and using water captured in your rain barrel can save about 1,300 gallons during peak summer months! Rain barrels are generally inexpensive and are easy to install, operate, and maintain. Rain barrel diverter kits can be used to attach a barrel to your downspout in communities where downspout disconnections¹ aren't permitted, and they can make winterizing your rain barrel easier!

Downspout disconnection or diversion to a rain barrel, **rain garden**,² or existing landscaping, keeps excess water out of your community's storm system. During a heavy rain event, each downspout on your home can send as much as 12 gallons a minute directly into your local storm system, which can consist of storm sewers and roadside ditches. All this excess runoff can contribute to flooding and erosion.

Native Plants: <https://crwp.org/native-plants/>

Reduce the amount of lawn³ to mow this year by replacing some of your turf grass with native plants! Incorporating native plants into landscaping provides beauty and enhances habitat for beneficial pollinators and wildlife. Native plants cost less to care for than non-native species and turf grass because they have adapted to the soils of Northeast Ohio, minimizing their need for fertilizer, additional watering, and chemical applications.

Turf grass has short roots and provides little habitat or resources for important wildlife and pollinators, whereas native plant roots are extensive, and the plants provide both food and shelter for various critters. The deep-reaching root systems of native plant species allow for more stormwater to absorb, filter, and also help promote soil health.

Planting natives, especially **trees**,⁴ helps mitigate soil erosion, decreases flood impact, provides habitat, can provide shade that reduces energy costs, and improves air quality by filtering pollutants and pulling carbon from the atmosphere.

These simple practices bring many rewards such as keeping our watershed healthy, mitigating flooding and erosion issues, supporting our local ecosystems, saving you time and money, beautifying your property, and increasing property value!

Learn more and access additional resources at the following links: ¹<https://crwp.org/downspouts/>, ²<https://crwp.org/rain-gardens/>, ³<https://crwp.org/lawns/>, ⁴<https://crwp.org/trees/> and <https://treeselector-clevelandmetroparks.com/>

For more information about residential solutions for clean water and stormwater management, visit Chagrin River Watershed Partners' (CRWP) website at: <https://crwp.org/>.

From spring to fall, many rain barrel workshops are held by county Soil & Water Conservation Districts and other organizations. This is an excellent way to get your rain barrel for cheap, along with the information you need to install it at home!

