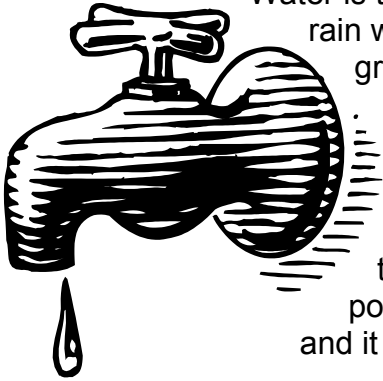


STORMWATER RUNOFF: MINIMIZING IMPACTS

MARINA D'ABREAU, Ed.D.



Water is the essence of life. In an average year, Florida receives over 50 inches of rain water, especially during the summer months. Yet, as Florida's population grows, the demand for this water continues to strain our natural resources. This is, in part, due to a loss of natural green space and an increase of impervious surfaces like concrete and asphalt, which prevent rain water from filtering back to our groundwater systems.

Storm water runoff is any water flowing off of roofs, driveways, and yards that carries fertilizers, pesticides, oils and other chemicals, contributing to pollution in our surface waterways. This is called non-point source pollution, and it can be controlled.

Reducing runoff from your property is simple. Follow these behaviors to make a difference, one step at a time...

- Install and maintain a Florida-friendly landscape that absorbs runoff and allows it to filter back into the soil.
- Choose drought-tolerant plants that don't need a lot of irrigation.
- Install practical areas of drought-tolerant turf for play, entertainment, pets, etc. Use ground covers as turf alternatives in low traffic areas of the landscape.
- Maintain 3" of mulch in plant beds to reduce erosion and retain soil moisture, minimizing watering needs.
- Follow local watering restrictions, and water only as needed. Many Florida-friendly plants, once established, can survive with little supplemental irrigation.
- Water in the early morning hours to avoid water loss from wind and evaporation.
- Install low-volume irrigation in plant beds to minimize overspray and excess watering of plants.
- Install a functioning rain shut-off device on all irrigation systems to avoid unnecessary watering.
- Use a rain gauge to track rainfall and determine if supplemental watering (on your assigned day) is necessary.
- Use rain barrels or cisterns to collect rain water for landscape irrigation. Rain barrels capture storm water runoff, reduce erosion around the foundation of the house, and provide a free source of water for your plants.

