



JEFFCO H₂O NEWS

ISSUE 34 - WINTER-SPRING

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All Aboard



If you are a passionate gardener or just like to keep your yard looking good, you probably already know that stormwater is a precious FREE resource that provides many more benefits staying on your yard than running off into a storm drain. Landscapes that are constructed to make the most of stormwater have [features](#) that allow water to slow down, spread out, and soak in. These features can include diverted downspouts, permeable pavement, rain gardens, rain barrels, meadows, trees, and bioswales. While any one of these elements can make a significant difference in the amount of [stormwater](#) that stays on your property, using a series of these elements provides much greater potential to make use of this resource. Creating a 'stormwater treatment train' in your yard can provide the multiple opportunities needed to work together to greatly increase the amount of water that stays on your property (less need for watering) and [improving the quality of water](#) that does leave your landscape (improved water quality in creeks and streams). Choosing to add a few or all of these features to your landscape can create a wonderfully functional example of integrated stormwater management without a huge investment in time or money!

What's Happening

MLK Day of Service - January 18 - [Learn](#) how you can join with other volunteers to make a difference! Volunteer at one of 2 locations and participate in a community roadside cleanup. All state and local health protocols will be observed.

Bi-Annual Valley Creek Cleanup - March 13 - The Valley Creek Cleanup is celebrating 11 Years of working to protect Valley Creek from water pollution! Please join us at one of the 4 Valley Creek Cleanup locations. Click [HERE](#) or call 205-325-8741 to learn more! All state and local health protocols will be observed.

Mulga Loop Road Cleanup - March 27 - Now in its 6th year, the Mulga Loop Road Cleanup brings together volunteers from area communities, municipalities, and schools to remove litter from along roadways. Click [HERE](#) or call 205-325-8741 for more information. All state and local health protocols will be observed.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event - April 24 - Three drop off locations are planned (Bessemer, Gardendale, Irondale), open to all residents of Jefferson County. More information and a list of what to bring for FREE is coming [HERE](#) soon. Call 205-325-8741 for more information. All state and local health protocols will be observed.

Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Series - Birmingham Botanical Gardens - Returning for its 10th year, this series of FREE seminars packed with helpful information for homeowners will start again in March and run through September. Information is coming [HERE](#) soon.

When Being a Quitter is Good



We've all heard at one time or another that quitters never win. That adage probably applies to many things in life, but certainly not to littering. Now in its fourth year, the *Litter Quitters* high school anti-litter video competition is helping Jefferson County residents 'win' the battle against littering. *Litter Quitters* is a video competition spearheaded by multiple local governments including Jefferson County, local agencies, and businesses. The competition is offered to the 30 public high schools in Jefferson County. The schools are divided into three watershed sections and compete with the other schools in that section (North - Locust Fork, West - Black Warrior/Valley Creek, and East - Cahaba). The participating schools each create and submit an anti-litter stormwater protection video. The videos will be posted on the *Litter Quitters* website www.litterquitters.org and be available April 10-22 for viewing and voting. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners in each watershed section will be declared on April 23 based upon the number of "likes" their video receives.

The winners will be awarded cash prizes and featured on television. A 30-second public service message will be professionally produced with one student from each participating school delivering the message. This message will air during television programs viewed in 22 counties. Be sure to visit the *Litter Quitters* website and vote for your favorite video to help the students win a cash prize! You also can check out upcoming cleanups throughout Jefferson County where you can volunteer. Most of all, please don't litter - ask your neighbors and friends to do the same!

The Not So Traditional Garden



If all of those Instagram and Pinterest posts by people creating beautiful backyard gardens during months of sticking close to home have inspired you to give it a try, there are many great [resources](#) to get you started on the right path. [Victory gardens](#) are currently very popular, and reimagining the concept to suit your space can make this accessible to most people. But if it all seems a little overwhelming, you may want to consider starting with something more manageable. Adding [houseplants](#) inside your home has been a popular trend, and one that is accessible to everyone whether you live in a single family home or tiny apartment. If you have set your sites on doing something outside, you could consider starting with a [container](#) or [vertical](#) garden. These options are great for beginners as well as a way to add interest to an established landscape. Plus, they easily tuck into the corner of a small yard or fit on a small balcony. Plants grown indoors or outdoors in a [container](#) can include edibles such as herbs and [vegetables](#). Growing plants in containers has some advantages—virtually eliminating weed problems, and flexibility in relocating the plants to better light or temperature. Plus, using decorative and interesting containers can really elevate the look of your landscape. One disadvantage is that plants grown outdoors in containers can dry out easily and may need more frequent watering and supplemental feedings to ensure optimum growth. Be sure to follow [guidelines](#) for the best way to plant and grow your choices.

Good Housekeeping



You may have been told at some point in your life that there is a place for everything and everything should be in its place. While that was no fun as a kid, adopting that principle as an adult can make life easier and save you lots of time finding your car keys. Whether you are working from home in a tiny area carved out of a bedroom or going in to your workplace every day, keeping an organized, uncluttered and hazard free space is critical to your health, safety and productivity. Called Good Housekeeping practices, how we handle, store, use, and dispose of many things in our everyday lives can have a direct impact on our environment at home and at work. At home, clutter can increase anxiety levels, disrupt sleep, and interfere with ability to focus. At work, disorganization and lack of attention to properly handling materials and using equipment can cause mistakes to be made and accidents to happen. Some of those mistakes and accidents can cause injury to staff, damage to County property, and spills and other incidents which can create stormwater pollution. As Jefferson County employees, we all do important work. It is our responsibility to perform our work in a manner that is safe for ourselves and our co-workers while also protecting the environment. Be sure you know the proper use, storage, cleanup, and disposal procedures for materials you use at home and work. Thank you for doing your part to keep your work, home and environment safe and clean.