MONTGOMERY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

THE STORMWATER ADVOCATE

FALL EDITION MONTGOMERY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT NOVEMBER 12, 2026

WELCOME BACK TO THE STORMWATER ADVOCATE!

Welcome back to our fourth edition of The Stormwater Advocate! With this edition, we have now discussed how all four seasons affect stormwater. Our goal is to continue to inform the people of Montgomery County about these relevant topics and help show ways you can play a role in improving water quality.

Fall typically comes with a drop in temperature and in rainfall. While less rainfall may reduce the amount of stormwater runoff, water pollution remains a major concern and a top priority.In this edition, topics like leaf disposal, natural foaming, surface sheen, and winterizing rain barrels should provide a better understanding of stormwater and the fall season's impact on it. With the seasonal change, it is important to learn what our job at MSWCD is and what you can look out for when keeping stormwater free of pollutants this fall.



Responsible Leaf Disposal

When it comes to the disposal of leaves, make sure to use methods that aren't harmful to our waterways. Leaves don't just clog waterways; they also release nutrients as they decompose, which can contribute to algae growth and reduced oxygen levels. This can harm aquatic life. Aim to rake leaves into piles or a bin to decompose naturally. Many cities offer leaf pickups and drop-off locations for disposal. A way to use leaves as a resource is to shred them for garden mulch. This helps enrich the soil by improving aeration in heavy clay and helping sandy soils hold moisture.

OHIO EPA FOUNDED IN FALL

THE OHIO EPA WAS FOUNDED ON OCTOBER 23, 1972

The agency was established under Ohio Governor John J. Gilligan. It was formed to centralize Ohio's efforts to protect and provide a more coordinated response to pollution. The establishment helped create a foundation for water quality and stormwater programs that operate in Ohio today. Thanks to conservation efforts in Ohio, only 18% of blue-line streams met water quality standards in 1980. Today, that number has increased to 89%.

Natural Foaming



During the fall season, falling leaves and other organic materials accumulate in storm drains and local waterways. As this debris decomposes, it releases natural compounds into the water, creating the foam. Seasonal rainfall carries these materials through stormwater systems and into nearby streams, where the water and air mixture can cause foam to develop. While natural foaming is not necessarily a sign of pollution, it can be confused with a possible sewage discharge as both create a bubbly layer on the water.

Surface Sheen



A surface sheen is a thin, shiny film that forms on the surface of water and can sometimes resemble an oil slick. During the fall, decaying leaves release natural organic compounds, such as lipids and tannins, that can create these films on the water's surface. Rainfall can also wash oil, grease, and other pollutants from roads and parking lots into nearby storm drains, eventually carrying them into local waterways. These substances can produce a visible sheen on the water, making it important to recognize the difference between naturally occurring sheens and those caused by pollution. Natural sheens break into separate patches when disturbed, whereas oil slicks tend to flow back together, reforming a continuous film. Changes in streamflow and calmer areas of the water allow surface sheens to become more noticeable. Primarily near streambanks, outlets, or areas where the water is relatively still is where it is most noticable.

Winterizing Rain Barrels

When winterizing rain barrels, open the spigot to drain any remaining water from the barrel and disconnect the barrel from the downspout. This is to ensure that no water is left inside the barrel which when it freezes it can expand and damage the plastic, wood, or metal. Be sure to remove, drain, and store hoses, screens, filters, and other removable attachments in a dry location to prevent them from deteriorating over the winter as well. If possible, store your rain barrel in a garage, shed, or other sheltered area. If the barrel must remain outdoors, secure it according to the manufacturer's recommendations to prevent water, snow, and ice from collecting inside and to stop it from blowing away. Taking the proper precautions will help extend the life of your rain barrel and ensure it is ready for use again when spring arrives.



Gutters

Cleaning out gutters is a necessity in the fall. While you're up there, think about gutter protection. Gutter guards work the same way storm grates do by preventing leaves and debris from entering the gutter in the first place. However, they should still be inspected and cleaned regularly to prevent buildup. Improperly maintained roof gutters can harbor bacteria from decaying leaves and other plant matter, which can be carried away with runoff. Gutter overflows caused by blockages can lead to soil erosion below the gutter dripline, potentially carrying sediment into our waterways. Be sure to check downspouts as well, making sure they are clear and directing water away from your home's foundation and toward appropriate drainage areas.