

Reducing Runoff Affects Water Quality

When the issue of water quality in Little Bay is discussed, most people often think of it solely as the responsibility of government entities. But the truth of the matter is that we ALL play an integral part in maintaining its quality and viability. Even the most mundane actions on our part can affect Little Bay's ecosystem.

Washing your vehicle in the driveway, overuse of fertilizer and pesticides, leaving grass clippings in the street, overwatering, and malfunctioning watering systems are all culprits when it comes to polluting our waterways. After all, anything that runs from our yards to the streets ultimately enters the drains, which, in turn, goes directly to the bay.

Did you know that grass clippings, detergent, fertilizer, and tree leaves all contain phosphorus? While it is a naturally occurring plant nutrient, phosphorus contributes to algae growth. Not only does it turn waterways green, it also reduces water clarity, crowds out other plants, and diminishes oxygen available for fish. The result is distasteful and unsightly water that is bad for fish, wildlife, and humans.

So, what can you do to help? The most important is to deal with runoff in your own yard.

1. Make sure that yard waste is bagged or mulched. If you don't do your own yard, please tell your service that you don't want any grass clippings in the street.
2. Check your watering system to alleviate any unnecessary runoff.
3. Remember -- slow, deep watering is more effective than multiple waterings, which may cause runoff that carries eroded soil, nutrients and pesticides.
4. When possible use less concrete and asphalt, which are impervious surfaces that prevent water from soaking into the ground.

5. Check your gutters and downspouts to make sure they are emptying into an area where water can be absorbed. If not, consider using a rain barrel and use this excess to water your plants.
6. If you fertilize, use products that do not contain phosphorus and slow release nitrogen compounds. They are better for the plants and for the bays.
7. Reseed or mulch bare spots on your lawn, and avoid placing garden beds next to driveways or street curbs where soil can easily escape.

A little bit of care and maintenance by each of us can go a long way in enhancing our pleasure of Little Bay and preserving the delicate ecosystem.