

Follow guidelines for yard waste disposal, protecting the local water supply

As I write this article today, I find myself in disbelief that we already are approaching summer, and it seems like only yesterday we were celebrating Christmas and New Year's Day.

May, in my opinion, is the month when everyone begins preparing their outdoor space for summer parties, family gatherings and in some cases like mine, a graduation ceremony. My first grandchild will be graduating in just a few weeks and shortly after that, will be off to college in south Florida. Needless to say, this grandma is filled with pride!

I am privileged to work for a community of residents who take great pride in maintaining their beautiful community, by the looks of the impeccable, manicured lawns and landscapes I drive by every day.

While some of our residents enlist the aid of a landscape contractor, there are those who find pleasure in doing yard work themselves. While we appreciate those efforts, for the safety of our sanitation "pitchers" I would like to remind residents of the guidelines when placing the yard waste at your curb for pickup:

- Tree limbs or branches should not exceed 4 feet in length.

- Please bundle and tie such material and place it at the end of your driveway.

- Do not place dirt, rocks, sod or concrete in bags for pickup due to weight restrictions.

- Lawn clippings and similar yard waste should be placed in biodegradable bags.

An informational flyer containing collection schedules and contact information is available at districtgov.org/community/sanitation-collection-schedule-combo.pdf.

I also would like to revisit earlier articles in which I provided



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information regarding the importance of stormwater pollution prevention.

Stormwater runoff is precipitation from rain that flows over the ground. As it flows, it can pick up debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants and deposit them into a storm drain system or water body.

Storm drains are designed to prevent flooding and anything that enters a storm drain system is discharged untreated into our ponds and wetlands. Pollutants that make it into our water bodies have the potential of having a negative impact on our environment.

For this reason, the community development districts are required by the Clean Water Act to comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit program. This program is administered by the State of Florida and its goal is to reduce the amount of pollution that enters storm drain systems.

We also have a District policy that prohibits unauthorized discharges of any kind and prohibits illicit connections to the storm drain system. An illicit connection is any connection that allows any non-stormwater discharge to enter the storm drain system.

Examples of illicit connections include pumping pool water which has not been de-chlorinated into the storm drain or pumping water from a washing machine into a storm drain.

As described in the District policy, pollutants include, but are not limited to: paints, varnishes

and solvents; oil and other automotive fluid; non-hazardous liquid and solid waste; yard waste; refuse, rubbish, garbage, litter or other discarded or abandoned objects; pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers; hazardous substances and waste; sewage; animal waste; waste and residue that result from constructing a building or structure.

Basically, a pollutant is almost anything that isn't water that enters the storm drain.

There are things that you, as residents of The Villages, can do to prevent stormwater runoff pollution:

- Pick up after your pet and dispose it in your toilet at home or in your household trash after you have picked it up. Pet waste can be a major source of bacteria and excess nutrients in local waters when not properly disposed of.

- When pet waste is not picked up, rain and sprinkler runoff carry the waste across lawns, into streets and gutters, then down the storm drain and directly into local ponds and wetlands.

- As pet waste decays in a water body, it uses up oxygen, sometimes releasing ammonia. Low oxygen levels and ammonia combined with warm temperatures can be detrimental to the health of fish and other aquatic life.

- Pet waste also contains nutrients that promote weed and algae growth. The water can become cloudy and green, making it unattractive. Pet waste also carries bacteria, viruses and parasites that can pose risks to human health and threaten wildlife.

- Use fertilizers sparingly and sweep up driveways, sidewalks and roads.

- Direct downspouts away from paved surfaces.

- Take your car to the car wash instead of washing it in the

driveway.

Check your car for leaks and recycle motor oil. Used motor oil is a valuable resource. It can be used for industrial fuels, mixed with asphalt and made into road-base, and refined into lubricants.

Just one gallon of oil will pollute 1 million gallons of water.

Follow these simple steps to recycle your used motor oil:

1. Drain your used motor oil in a lean, sealed container.

2. Recycle your used motor oil and filters by taking them to an approved collection site. Many full-service gas stations and retailers that sell auto parts will accept your used motor oil.

Please remember, anything that enters a storm sewer system

is discharged untreated into the local water bodies and has the potential to negatively impact our environment.

For additional information on how to keep our communities environmentally safe, go to districtgov.org and click on The Villages Water Wisdom logo.

In closing, I would like to inform our residents of an event hosted by Sumter County Public

Works to collect household electronics and hazardous waste. The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. May 23 in the side parking lot of South Sumter High School, 706 N. Main St., Bushnell.

Just a few of the items being accepted are latex and oil-based paints, fertilizers, TVs, VCRs, fluorescent lamps and devices containing mercury.

For more information and a complete list of materials accepted at this event, call Sumter County Public Works at 569-6700.

Until next time here at Our Place, have a safe summer!

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