



Del-Aware Backyard Rebates

A pilot program designed to educate residents about soil health and water quality, and incentivize backyard conservation through rain barrel and native plant rebates.

Delaware
Soil and Water
Conservation District



This program was designed and inspired by Franklin Soil and Water's Community Backyards program.

COMMUNITY BACKYARDS

Save Money. Protect Clean Water.



Franklin Soil and Water
Conservation District

Delaware Soil and Water Conservation District

Our mission is to bring people, government agencies, and private interests together to manage the natural resources and environmental challenges of Delaware County and the state of Ohio.

soilandwater.co.delaware.oh.us



Del-Aware Backyard Rebates: An Educational & Rebate Program

Goal: Engage, educate, and financially assist backyard conservation practices that reduce stormwater runoff and stormwater pollution to protect our local waterways.

[Del-Aware Backyard Rebates Website](#)

[Community Backyards Website](#)

Please note that Community Backyards is a program for Franklin County residents, and Del-Aware Backyard Rebates is for designated Delaware County residents. The Community Backyards website has many great resources, however, please check the Delaware Soil and Water website for our rules.



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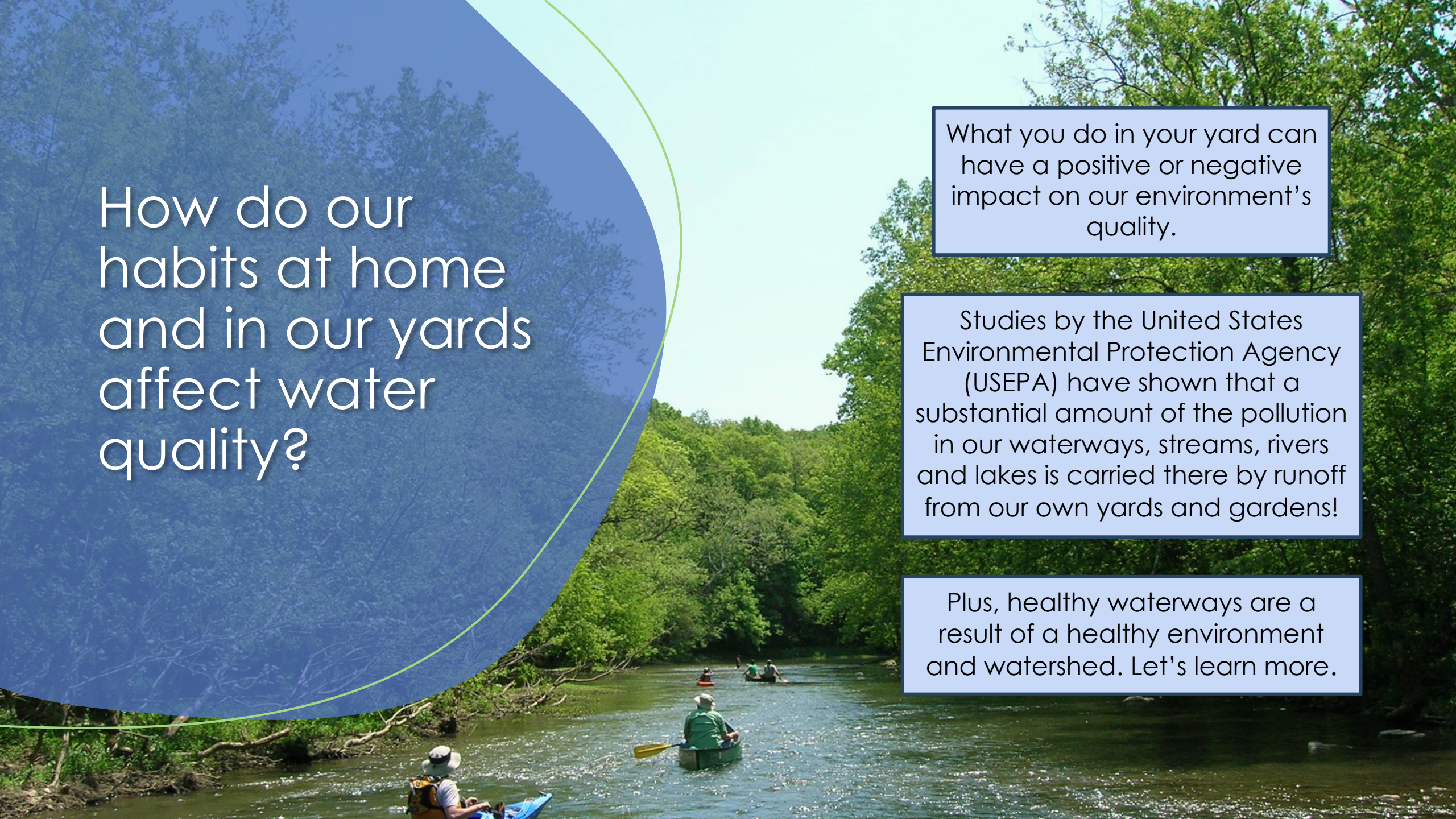
Special Thanks to our Program Funders and Vendors!



Program Funders/Participating Municipalities



Program Vendors

A scenic river flows through a lush, green forest. Several people are kayaking down the river. The water is clear and reflects the surrounding trees. The sky is bright and clear. A large blue circular graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the main title.

How do our habits at home and in our yards affect water quality?

What you do in your yard can have a positive or negative impact on our environment's quality.

Studies by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) have shown that a substantial amount of the pollution in our waterways, streams, rivers and lakes is carried there by runoff from our own yards and gardens!

Plus, healthy waterways are a result of a healthy environment and watershed. Let's learn more.

Water Quality History



Before Regulations

We did not always have environmentalism and water pollution regulations. Pre-regulations, toxic waste, sewage, and pollution were dumped into our waterways freely.

Result

Without regulations, we experienced disasters such as the Cuyahoga River Fires in the mid 1900s.

Environmentalism

These river fires, coupled with other similar environmental hazards and events, led to the environmentalism movement that eventually led to the forming of Earth Day, along with regulations to help protect and clean up our waterways.



50 YEARS OF THE

CLEAN WATER ACT

Since 1972



Watersheds:

Our Actions Contribute to Water Quality



A watershed is a land area where all the water (stormwater, rainwater, snow melt) that falls onto it drains from the land into a specific body of water. In Delaware County, this might include Big Walnut Creek, Alum Creek, the Olentangy River, or the Scioto River.

What goes on in the watershed directly affects the health and quality of the waterway! A healthy watershed leads to a healthy waterway.

There are quite a few different watersheds in Central Ohio due to our various creeks and rivers. Look at the map on the next page and see what watershed you are in right now.

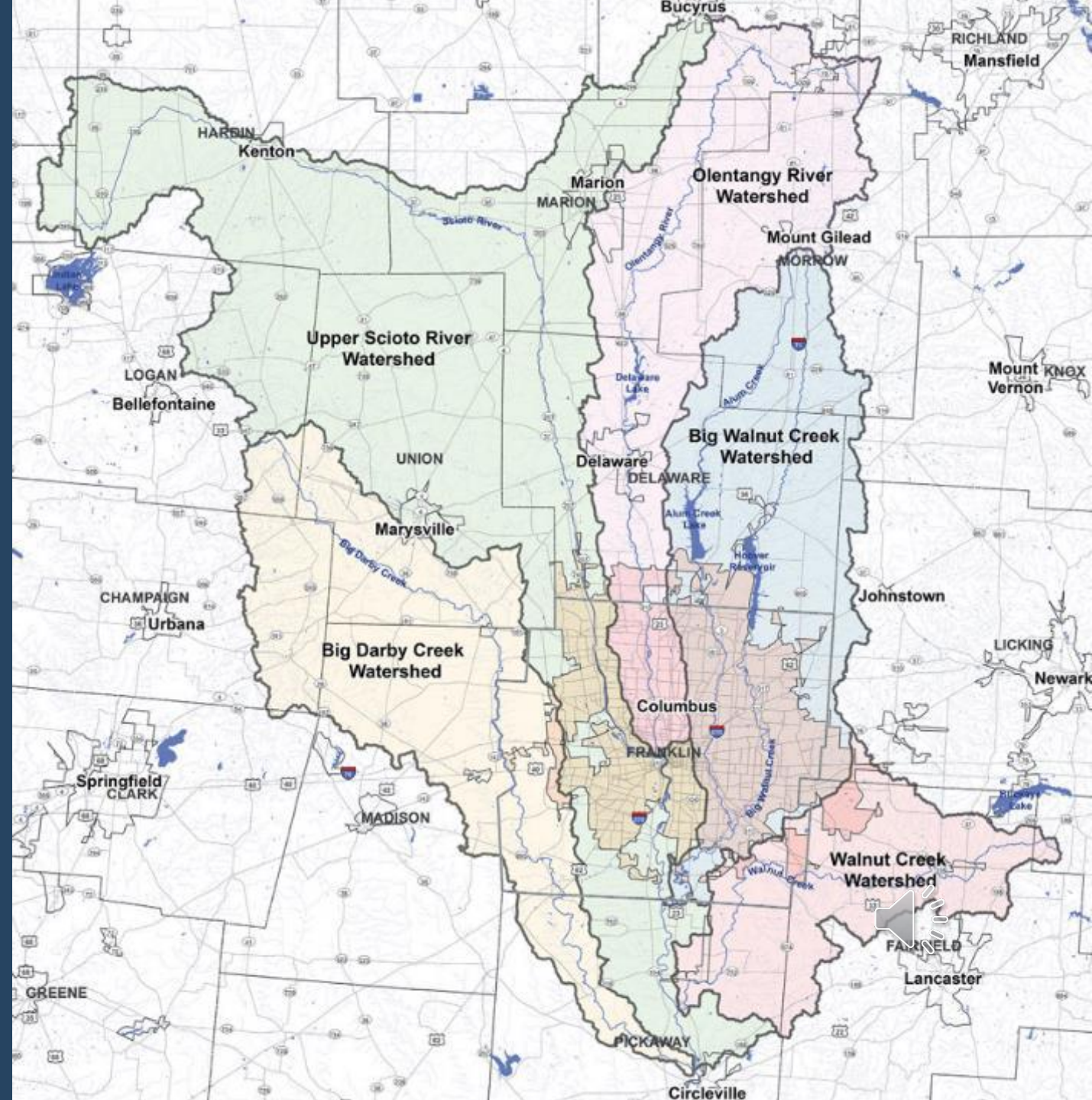
Our watersheds all eventually drain down to the Ohio River and eventually the Mississippi River. Find out what watershed you live in by typing in your address to the MyWaterway tool from US EPA. Visit mywaterway.epa.gov.

Watersheds:

Water Quality is Connected
to Land Use



Find out your watershed at
mywaterway.epa.gov



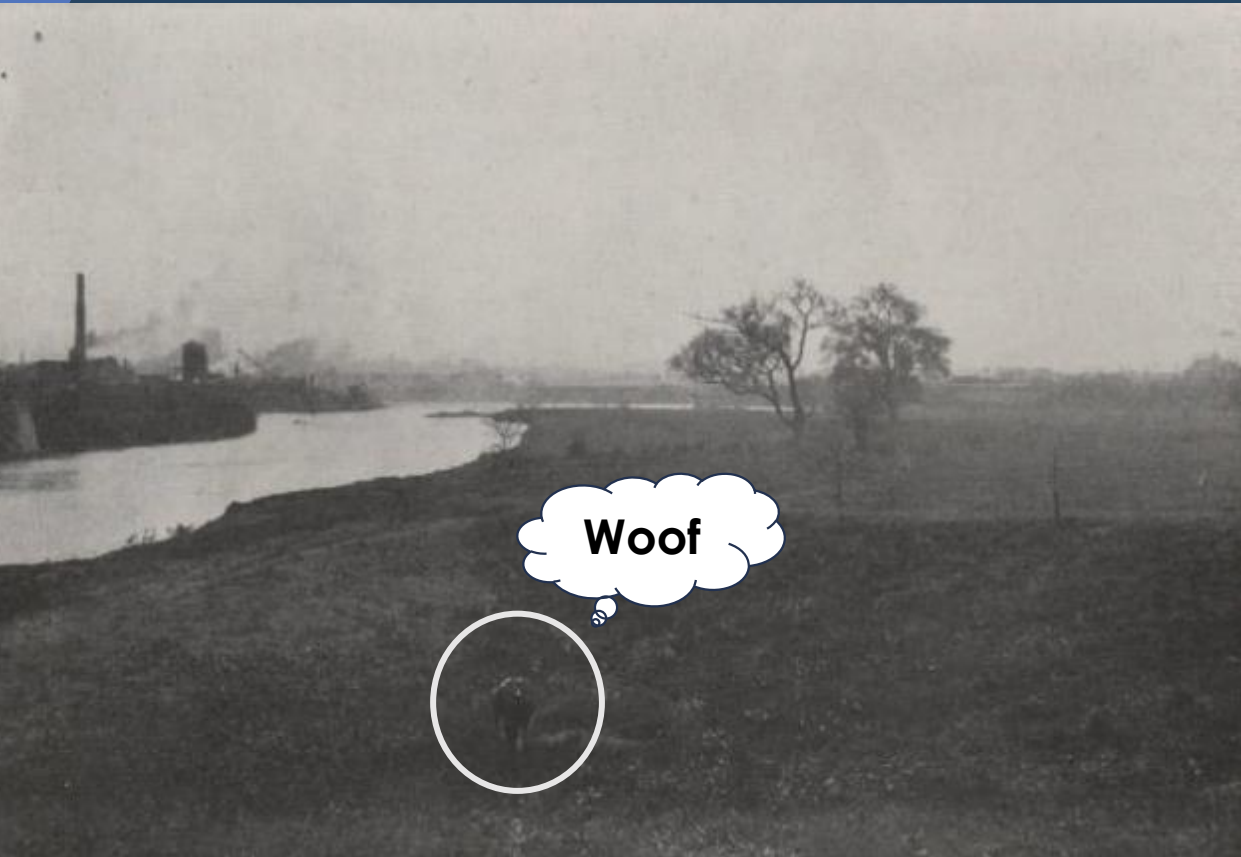
The Scioto River: Then vs. Now

1918

"Where the Rivers Meet", Norwest Magazine, 1918

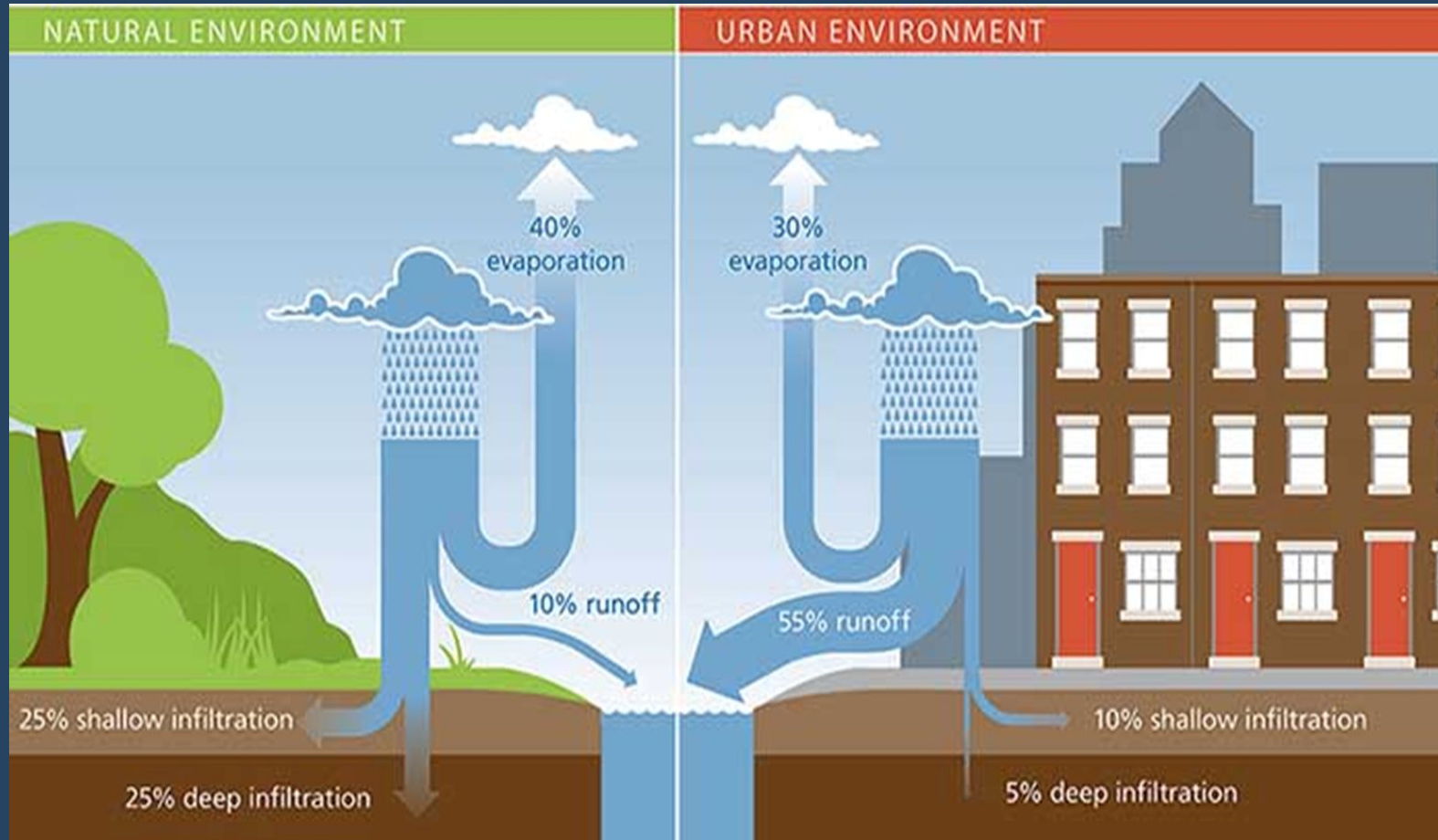
Today

Experience Columbus, Randall L. Schieber



Both photos were taken ~100 years apart near the same area – where the Scioto and Olentangy Rivers meet near downtown Columbus.

Pervious vs. Impervious Surfaces



Impervious: Not able to soak in water

- Pavement
- Parking lots
- Sidewalks
- Roads
- Roofs
- Saturated and/or compacted turfgrass

Pervious: Able to soak in water

- Woodlands
- Prairies
- Gardens
- Grass

- More development = more impervious surfaces = Less infiltration, more runoff, and more flooding.
- When surfaces cannot soak in water, the rainwater runs off the land, becoming what we call **stormwater runoff**.

Storm Drains: Infrastructure Collecting Stormwater Runoff

We use storm drains to divert rainwater and snowmelt to prevent flooding and standing water.

Storm drains are infrastructure to manage rainwater that runs off the land, becoming what we call "stormwater."



Contact us to participate in a storm drain labeling project!



Storm drains are designed to take in the stormwater, moving it through underground pipes straight to the nearest body of water – NOT the sewer plant!

Storm Sewer vs. Sanitary Sewer

Our storm sewer systems are designed to capture stormwater and drain directly to a nearby creek or ditch.

They are SEPARATE from the sanitary sewer system.

Untreated stormwater flows directly from the roadways into the storm sewers and out into a nearby waterway. They do NOT send stormwater to the sewer plant!

Stormwater is UNTREATED water flowing directly to waterways.



Stormwater Pollution: Rainwater that Picks Up Pollutants

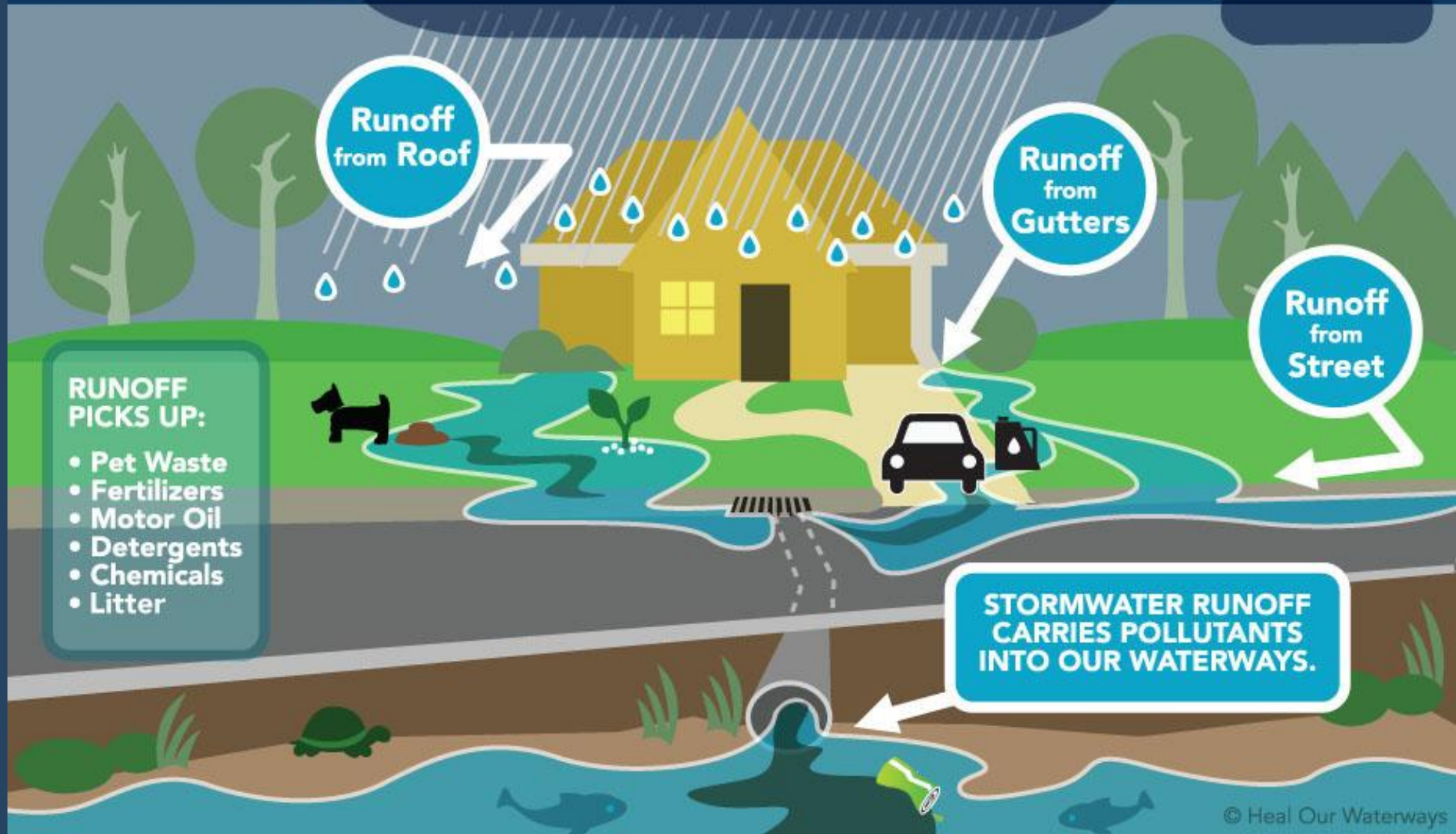


Anything that is not rainwater =
stormwater pollution



Stormwater Runoff Pollutes

Stormwater Pollution At Home



Stormwater Pollution on a Regional Scale

Have you ever wondered how trash end up in the environment and waterways?

Check out this graphic for a more in-depth look.



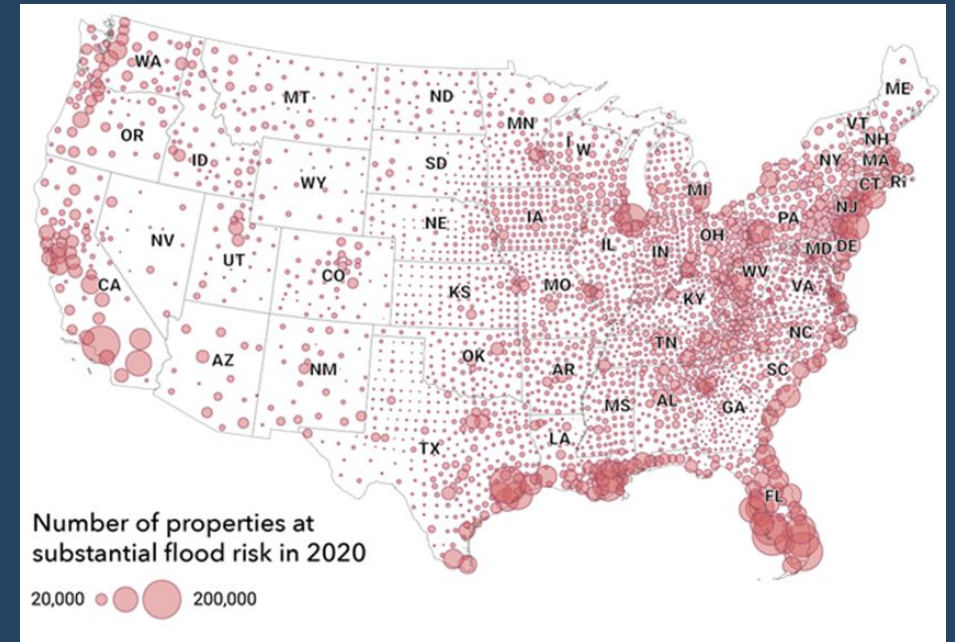
Recap: Benefits of Reducing Stormwater Runoff & Pollution

- Protect our water quality.
- Reduce localized flooding during heavy rainfall.
- Improve our regional resiliency to weather and rainfall variances.
- Save everyone money on costly water treatment and environmental remediation.

Salamander at Blendon Woods Metro Park



Olentangy River Flooding March 2022



14.6 million US properties (not people!) are at risk of flooding (First Street Foundation)

We can help protect water quality in our own yards by using these backyard conservation practices:

Rain Barrels



Rain Gardens



Native Plants



Better Lawncare Practices



Composting



Rain Barrels: Save & Recycle Water

Benefits

- Reuses water that otherwise becomes stormwater runoff.
- Reduces localized flooding.
- Saves you money as an alternative to using tap water.



- Rainwater is soft compared to tap water, your plants will really appreciate it!

Important!
Rainwater is NOT considered "potable" or safe for drinking.

Using one **50-gal** rain barrel weekly for **6 months** would save **1,300** gal of water!

Rain Barrels Rebates: Requirements



HARDWARE INCLUDED



The EarthMinded RainStation Rain Barrel is the only rain barrel brand offered.

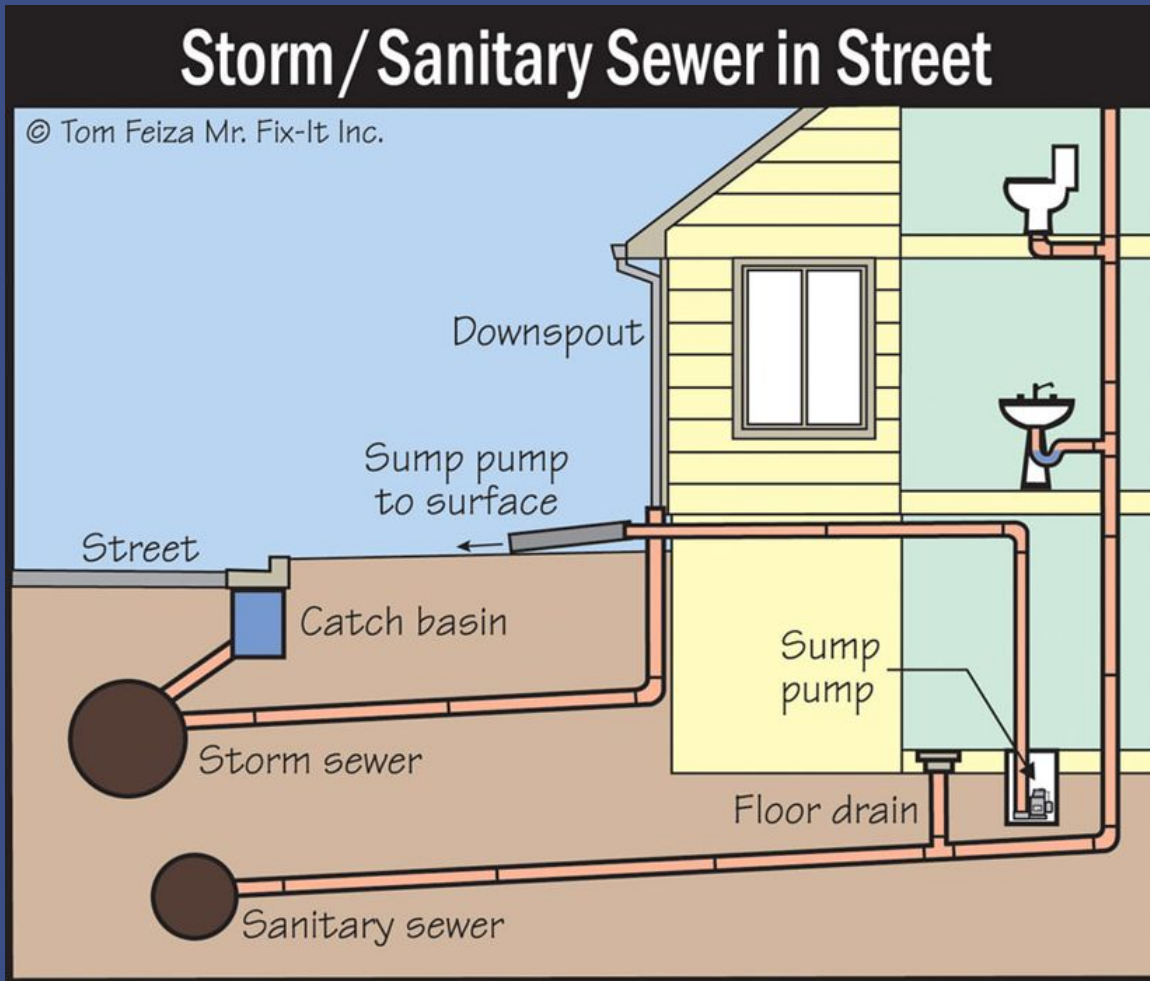
Why? It's an enclosed system that comes with the diverter kit and all the parts, including the hole saw bits needed to connect the diverter hose to your downspout.

Requirements

- Must be an enclosed rain barrel with a diverter hose kit.
- Diverter must be installed and level.

Available in-person at Delaware Soil and Water, or Scioto Gardens.

Rain Barrels: How They Work



Remember to drain your rain barrel once/week!

Diverter Hose

They can bend!

Most importantly,
keep the slope of
the hose level.

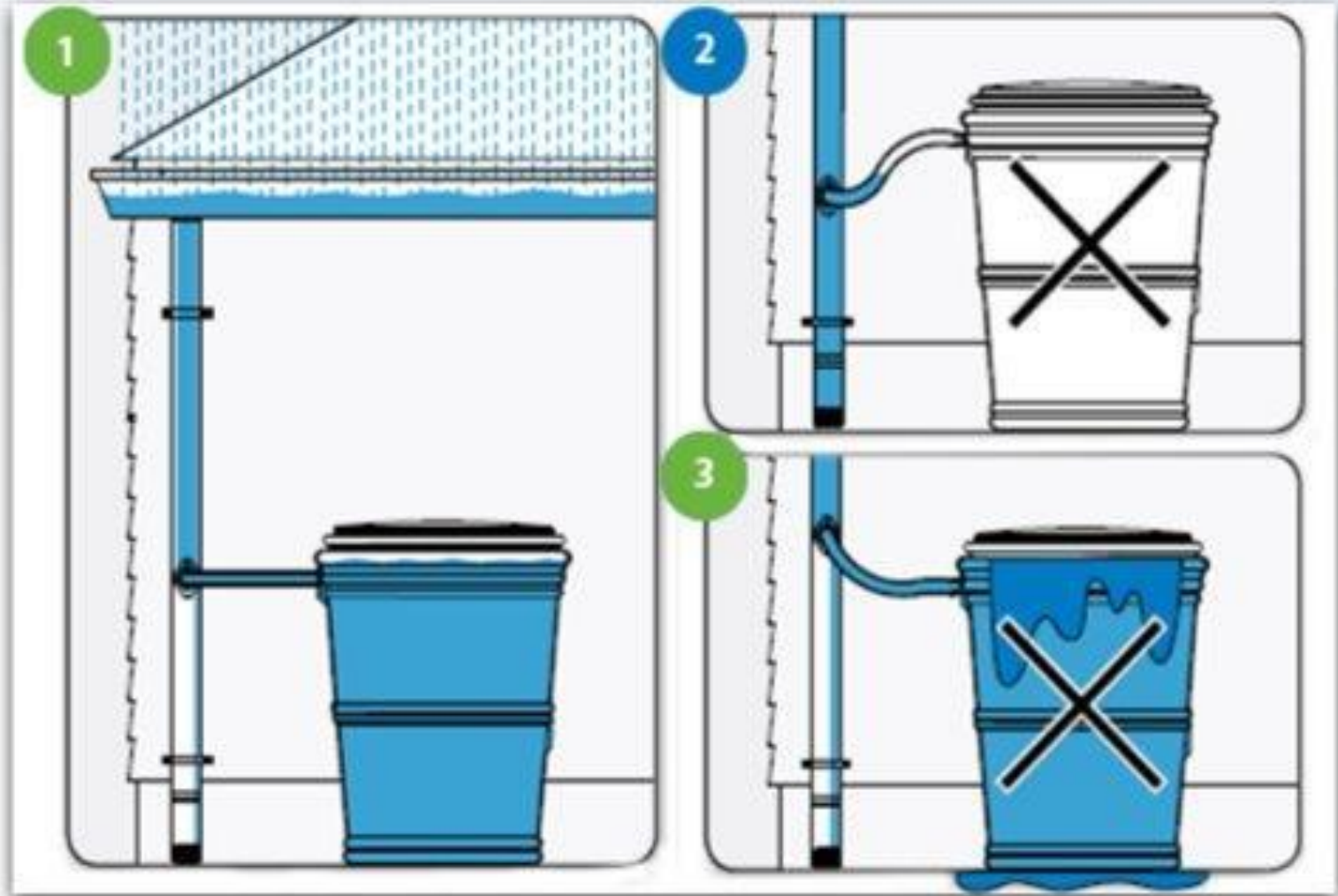


How to Install the Diverter Hose

1.) The hole must be drilled at the correct height for diverter to work properly.

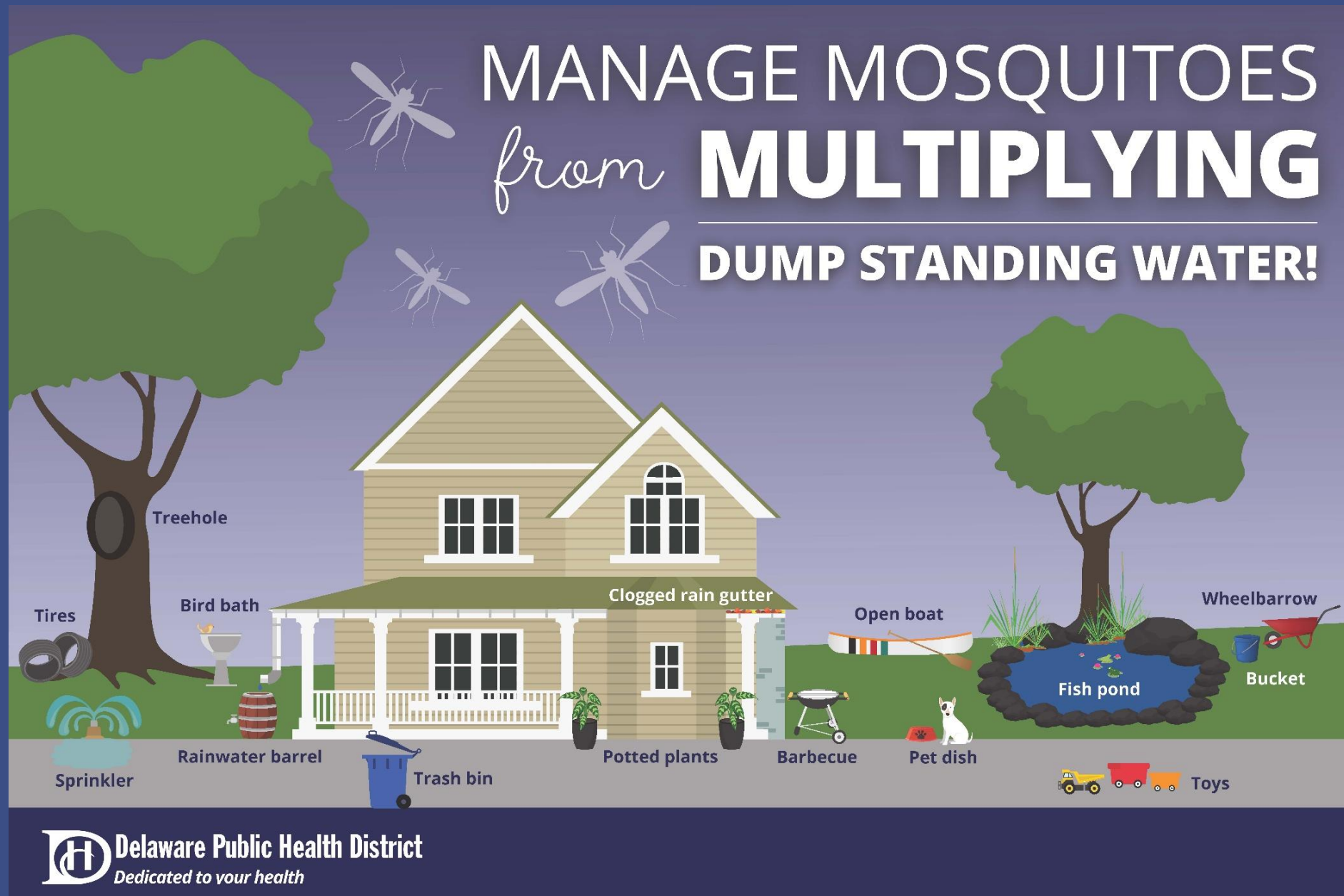
2.) If the hole is cut too low, the barrel will not fill.

3.) If the hole is cut too high, water will overflow from the barrel.



Routine Maintenance: Mosquito Prevention

- Drain once per week to keep mosquitoes out.
- The EarthMinded rain barrel lid doubles as a planter. Fill with plants or keep flipped.
- *Optional* - Treat the water in the rain barrel with Mosquito Dunks®. They have a specific compound that is toxic to only mosquitoes, so it's safe to use for watering plants and edible plants, around pets, in bird baths, etc.



Routine Maintenance: Clean Your Gutters & Winterize Your Rain Barrel



- Clean your gutters regularly. Utilize screens or hardware cloth in your gutters to keep leaves and debris out of your rain barrel.
- Use the water and drain your rain barrel regularly. We recommend draining it once per week.
- Disconnect and store for the winter.
 - Do not leave rain barrel connected over the winter! It can freeze and crack or bust.
 - Most diverter kits come with winterization instructions and a winter plug for the downspout connection.
 - In general, disconnect the diverter and store the rain barrel preferably under roof cover to avoid getting any water in it during the winter.

[More rain barrel resources can be found here on our website.](#)

Rain Gardens

Gahanna Resident



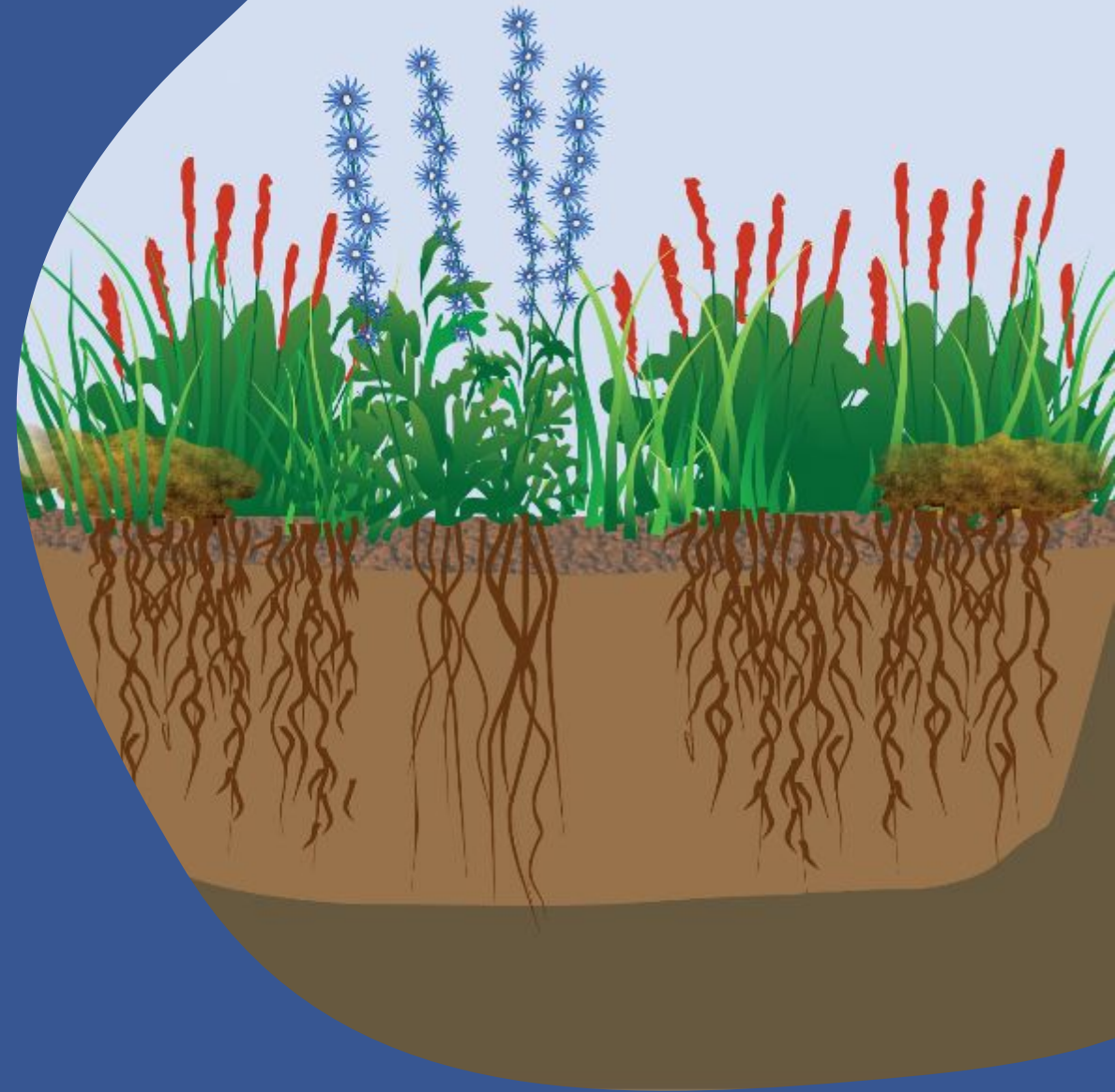
Blueprint Columbus



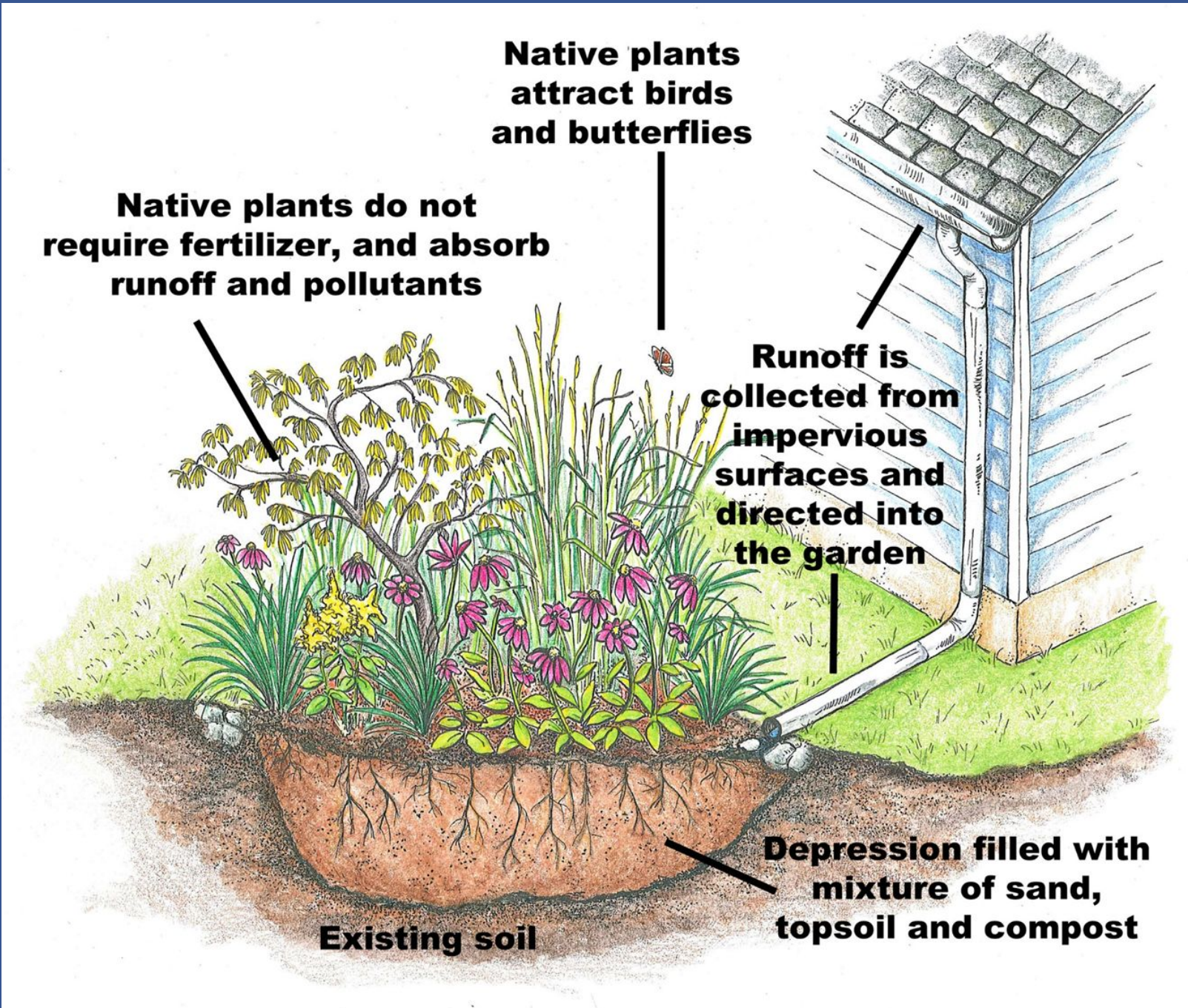
Pleasant Township Fire Station

Rain Gardens

- Bowl shaped gardens used to capture and filter stormwater.
- 3-to-6-inch depression below ground level.
- Fill with native, water-tolerant plants that absorb water and nutrients but can also handle periods of drought.



Rain Gardens: Design



Rain Gardens: Benefits

- Soak in stormwater runoff and pollution.
- Provide food and shelter for wildlife.
- No mowing required compared to traditional lawn.
- Provide functional landscaping interest.



Local Studies Conducted on Active Rain Gardens

- Westerville Brook Run neighborhood – 21 rain gardens were installed and monitored (Schlea, et al. 2013):
 - **82-95% reduction in stormwater** entering a nearby stream.
- Blueprint Columbus – Several rain gardens and permeable roads were installed in Clintonville and studied by OSU over 3.5 years (Smith, et al. 2023)
 - On a watershed scale, reduced each pollutant by up to:
 - Total Nitrogen – **24.1%**
 - Total Phosphorus – **47.4%**
 - TSS – **67.7%**

Brook Run Rain Garden



TSS = Total Suspended Solids = larger particles such as sediment/dirt, debris, road salt, plant and leaf litter.

Rain Gardens: Functional Gardens

Many Designs, Similar Goals



[More rain garden resources can be found here on our website.](#)

Native Plants = Indigenous Plants

Purple
Coneflower



*Echinacea
purpurea*



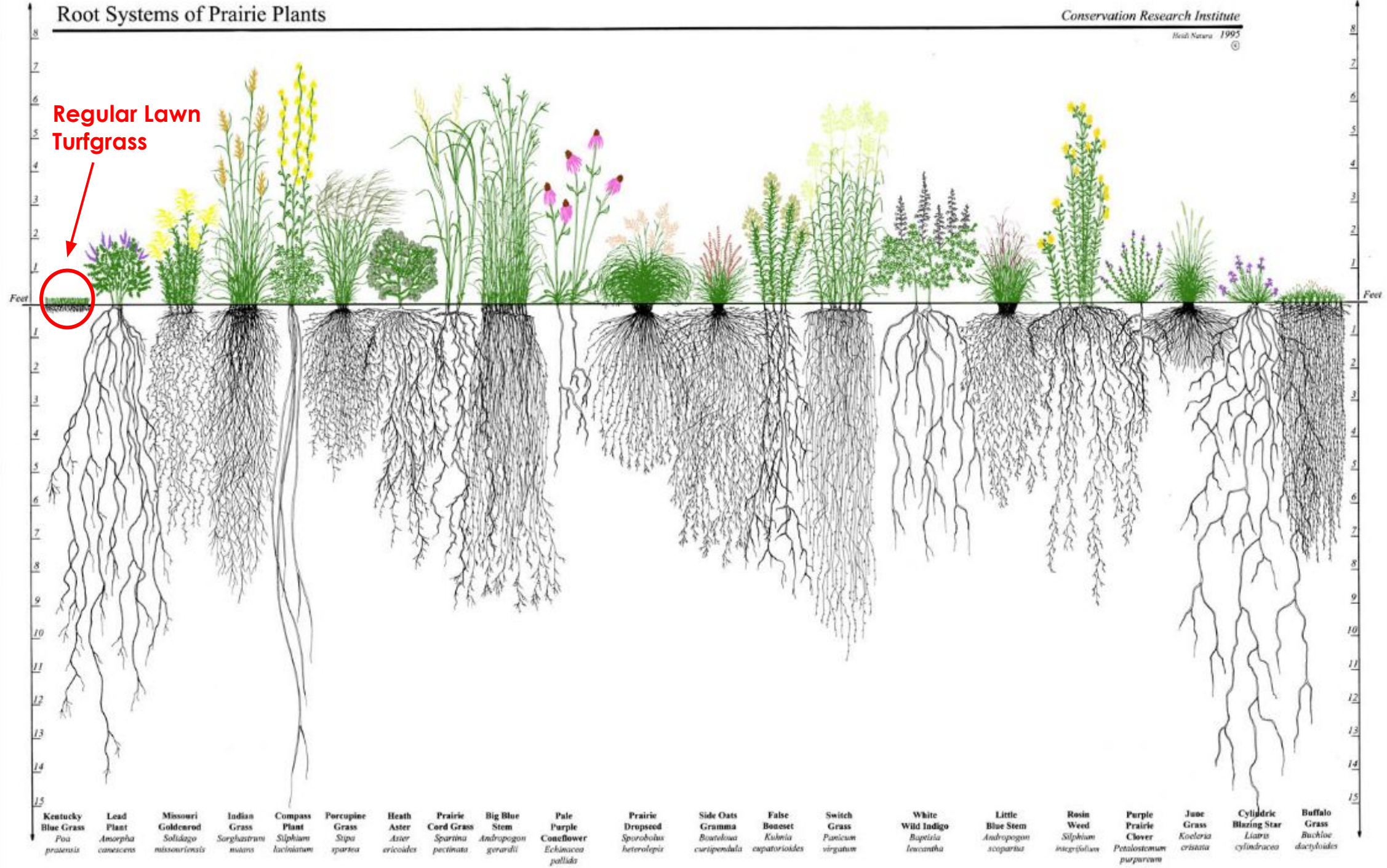
Green = Native Areas

Native Plants: What are they?

- Naturally occurring plants that are indigenous to our area.
- Plants that were here before European settlement.
- Plants that evolved with our soils and climate, and are therefore resilient.
- Plants that provide a food source and habitat for native pollinators and wildlife.
- They often have deep roots that help them absorb excess stormwater and filter out pollutants!



Root Systems of Prairie Plants



Regular Lawn Turfgrass



Native Plants: Resilient, Pollinator Magnets



Purple Coneflower
w/ Tiger Swallowtail
Butterfly



Black Eyed Susan
Host plant to 20 caterpillars, 29
bees



Little Bluestem
or Big Bluestem



Common Yarrow
Pollinator magnet, prairie
plant



Compass Plant
Visited by a bumblebee



Swamp Milkweed
Host plant for Monarchs!



Wild Bergamot
w/ Butterfly Chrysalis



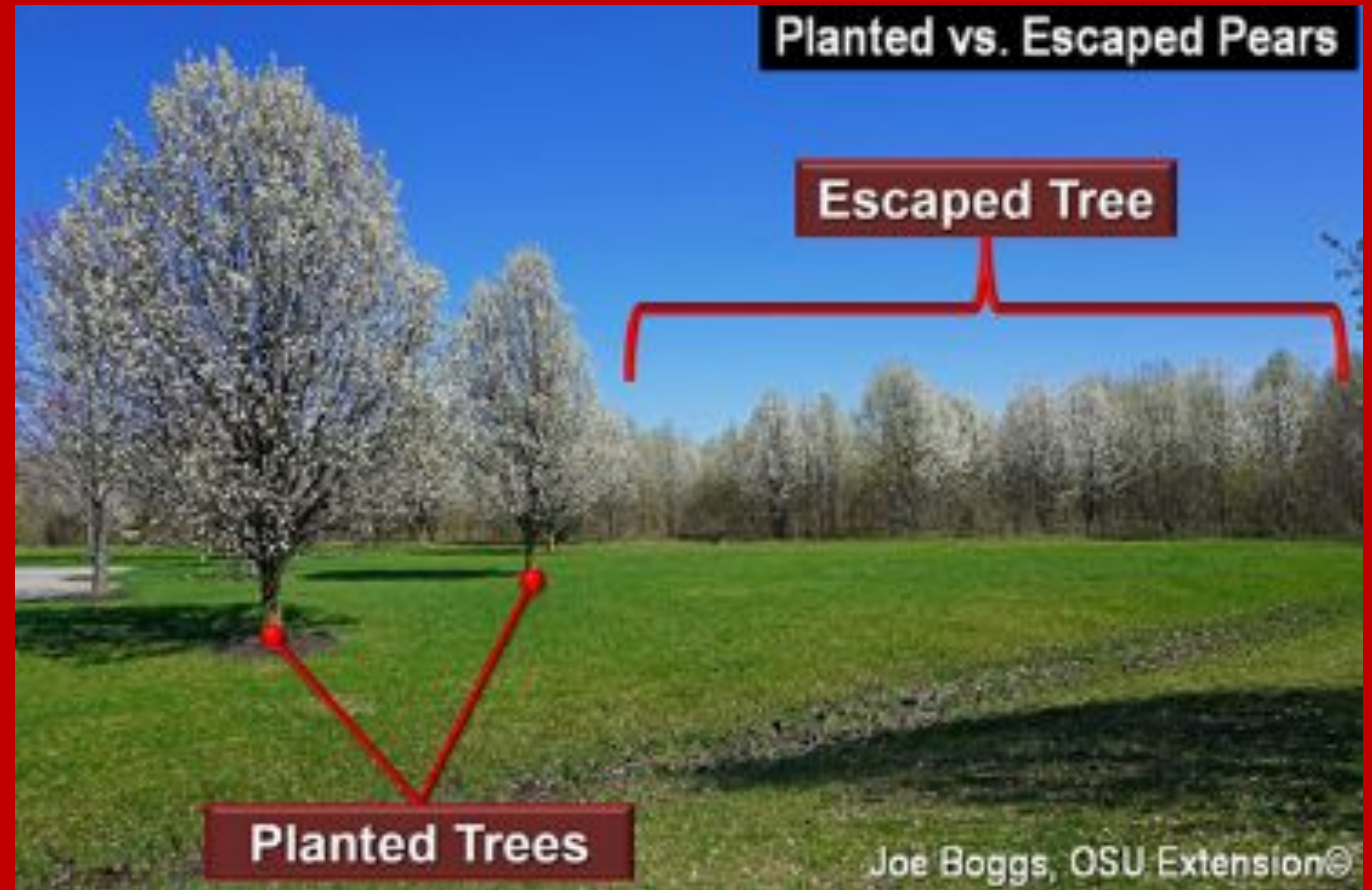
Cardinal Flower
Hummingbird favorite, rain garden



Black Oak
Oaks are host to hundreds of
species of caterpillars.

Invasive Plants: What are they?

- Non-native, aggressive plants that invade natural areas and cause harm to our ecosystems.
- Invasive and aggressive are NOT the same thing. In order for something to be invasive, it has to be aggressive and non-native.
- There are some native plants that are aggressive in a home garden, like Canadian Goldenrod, but are not considered invasive because they are indigenous to this area.
- In the US, invasive species cause \$34 billion in harm each year, affecting farming operations and natural areas.



Invasive Plants: Do Not Plant!



Callery Pear

Native Alternative White Flowering Trees:
Flowering Dogwood, Serviceberry, American
or Allegheny Plum



Chinese Silvergrass

Native Alternative Grasses: Switchgrass, Big or Little
Bluestem, Sea Oats, Gamma, Pennsylvania Sedge,
and more!



Japanese Barberry

Native Alternative Shrubs with Dark Fall Foliage:
Common Ninebark, Native Bush Honeysuckle



Butterfly Bush

Native Alternatives: Sweet Pepperbush,
Virginia Sweetspire, Blazing Stars



Burning Bush

Native Alternatives for Fall Red Color:
Red Chokeberry, Fragrant Sumac



Norway Maple

Native Alternative Maples:
Sugar Maple, Red Maple



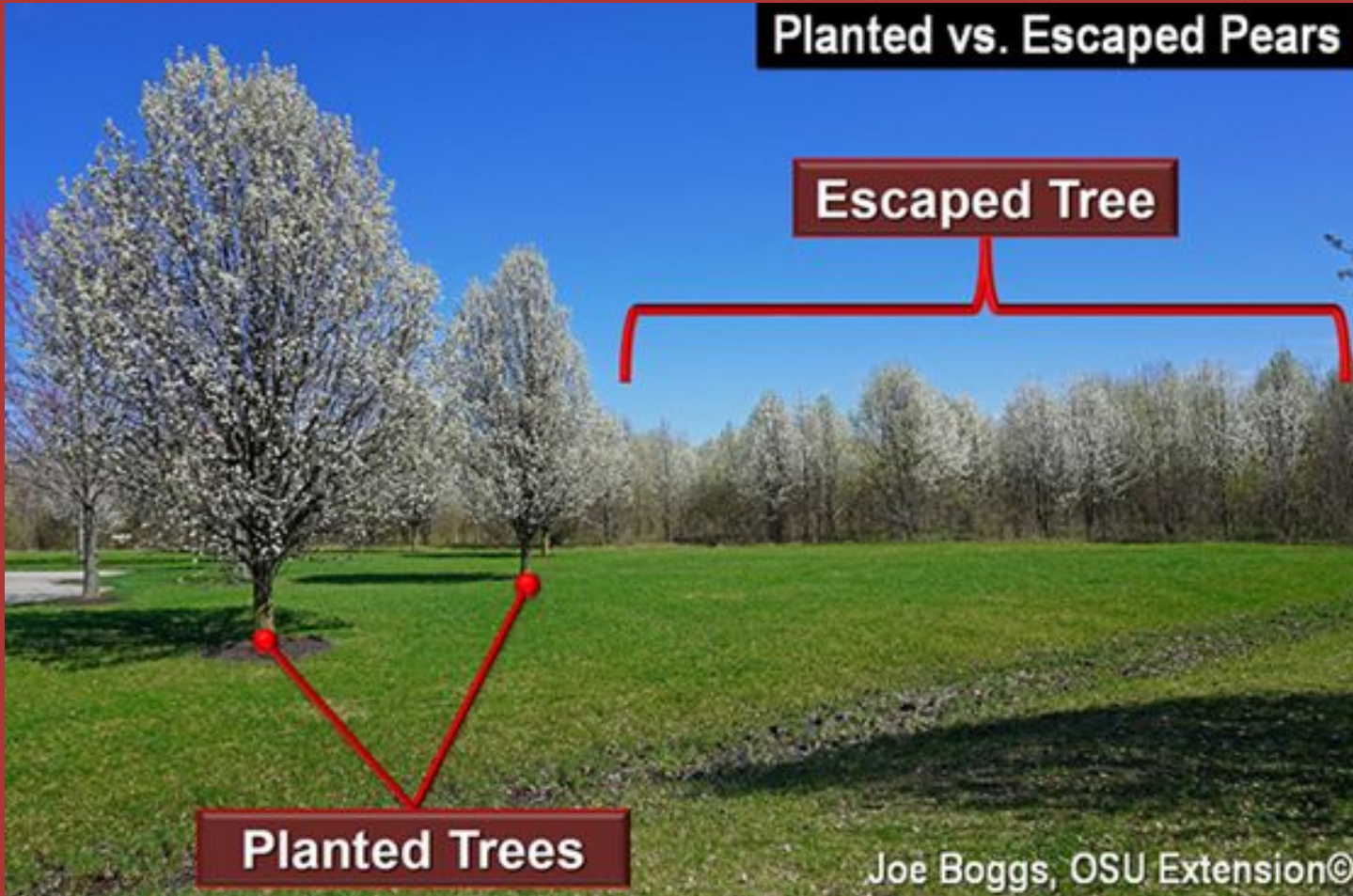
Japanese Meadowsweet/Spiraea

Native Alternatives: Steeplebush
(pink), New Jersey Tea (white)

“It doesn’t invade my yard.” It still invades natural areas!

- Depending on the species, invasive plants spread via:
- Physical seed dispersal via humans, animals, or wind
 - Rhizomes

Butterfly Bush @ Denison Bio Reserve,
Licking County, 9/4/2024



Native Gardening: Easy, Simple or Fancy, Creative!



Native Plants: What to Buy

Do your research before shopping or ask for native suggestions at the nursery!

Our Vendors, both native plant nurseries (**Leaves for Wildlife and Scioto Gardens**) are both very knowledgeable and can help you make selections. They will not sell you non-native plants, and they have Franklin SWCD's Invasive: Do Not Plant List on hand.

Use the Audubon Native Plant Database

- Find natives for your zip code
- Filter by type, fruit, specific birds it attracts

The screenshot shows the Audubon Native Plant Database interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Audubon logo, a search icon, and a 'Donate' button. Below this, there are three filter dropdowns: '1 selected', 'All plant resources', and 'Attracts: Any type of bird'. A 'Filter by keyword' input field and a 'Clear all filters' button are also present. The main content area displays two plant entries. The first entry is 'Alternat-Leaf Dogwood' (Cornus alternifolia), which is described as a small, perennial, deciduous tree or large multi-stemmed shrub. It features a photograph of the plant and a list of birds it may attract: Thrushes, Nuthatches, Woodpeckers, Chickadees & Titmice, Wood Warblers, and Orioles. The second entry is 'American Basswood' (Tilia americana), described as a perennial, deciduous tree. It includes a photograph and a list of birds it may attract: Wrens, Chickadees & Titmice, and Vireos. At the bottom of the page, there is a 'Find Local Support' section with a 'See What's Nearby' button.

audubon.org/native-plants

Native Plants: Where to Buy

Del-Aware Backyard Rebates - Immediate Discount Vendors

- Leaves for Wildlife (Sunbury)
- Scioto Gardens (Delaware)

Regional Native Plant Nurseries

- Natives in Harmony (Marengo)
- Riverside Native Trees (Delaware)

Pop-Up Sales

- Delaware County Master Gardeners (June & July)
- Delaware SWCD annual Tree Sale (April)

Local Garden Centers & Nurseries – Ask staff for help or look for native plant signage!

- Oakland Nursery (Delaware)
- Strader's Garden Center (Shawnee Hills)
- 1st Impressions Landscape & Garden Center (Sunbury)
- Thorsen's (Delaware)
- Miller's Country Gardens (Delaware)
- And many more...



Find these resources and more at soilandwater.co.delaware.oh.us/resources

Native Plant Rebates: Requirements

- Must be a perennial. Ohio native plants are strongly preferred.
- Absolutely **no invasive plants** will be accepted.
 - Refer to Franklin SWCD's *Invasive, Do-Not-Plant List*
- No annual, vegetable, herb, aquatic plants or seeds (including native perennial seeds).
- Must be planted in the ground.
 - Container plants restrict root growth, reducing their ability to capture and filter stormwater runoff.



[Find more native plant resources on our website](#)



Composting

A low-cost way to reduce food and yard waste while creating a nutrient-rich soil amendment at home.

Adding compost to your garden will put nutrients back into the soil and improve your soil health.

- Community composting programs and drop off locations
- delawarehealth.org/recycling-litter-prevention
- pricefarms.org
- savemorethanfood.org
- Recycleright.org
- communitybackyards.org/resources-composting

***While we encourage composting, compost bins are not an eligible item for Del-Aware Backyard Rebates at this time.**

Composting



compost it!

Yes! ALL FOODS (RAW, COOKED, SCRAPS), MEAT, BONES, OIL, COFFEE GROUNDS, DAIRY, PAPER TOWELS & NAPKINS



PRO TIPS:

- Line your bucket with newspaper to make emptying it easier.
- Keep your bucket in the freezer so that food scraps do not attract fruit flies.

No! NO PLASTICS OF ANY KIND, NO PRODUCE STICKERS, NO COMPOSTABLE UTENSILS/CUPS, NO K-CUPS & NO COFFEE FILTERS (Some coffee filters contain plastic that does not break down.)

When bucket needs emptied, take it to Price Farms Organics, Ltd. located at 4838 Warrensburg Road, Delaware, OH | Visit Pricefarms.org for hours



***While we encourage composting, compost bins are not an eligible item for Del-Aware Backyard Rebates at this time.**

- Keep Delaware County Beautiful Compost it! Program
- DIY Compost at home

www.delawarehealth.org/recycling-litter-prevention/

Food Waste

In Central Ohio, **1 lb** food is landfilled/resident/day = **1,000,000 lbs** food wasted every single day.

27% of our waste stream is compostable (food waste, yard waste and more).



Composting: From Waste to Garden Gold



Composting: The Recipe

30%
GREENS
(nitrogen)



70%
BROWNS
(carbon)



AVOID:

- Yard waste contaminated with chemicals
- Diseased, invasive, or poisonous plants
- Weeds with Seeds
- Meat, fish, grease, or dairy
- Cat or dog waste, kitty litter
- Plastic, bio-plastic, glass, and metal

Tips for Collecting Food Scraps at Home

Put a lid on it

Always keep your organics bucket closed to prevent insects and critters from getting into your food scraps. You don't want excess moisture either so if you keep your bucket outdoors, make sure the lid keeps water out.



Store in cool or shady area

Under a cabinet, in a shady part of the yard or the garage are all good places to keep your bucket.

Don't leave your bucket in the sun if you can help it. Food scraps degrade faster in warmer temperatures, so a warm pile is a stinky pile.



Empty regularly

Empty your bucket every week in the summer and every other week in the winter to minimize odors and bugs.



Wash your bin or use compostable liners

Regular washing of your bucket will reduce odor and insect issues. Alternatively use a compostable liner to keep your bucket clean. **Only use BPI (Biodegradable Products Institute certified compostable) liners.**



Keep a smaller container for meal use

Having a smaller container for food scraps on your counter, in your fridge or freezer can be more convenient when prepping meals than transporting food scraps to your larger bucket multiple times a day. There are many types of bins available but something as simple as a plastic tub will work. A countertop container with a carbon filter or a bin kept in a fridge or freezer will be much better at minimizing odors.



**SAVE  MORE
THAN FOOD**
MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Compost Bins

Not recommended
due to rodents!

Tumblers



On the Ground Bins



Worm Bins



DIY Bins & Open Piles



Better Lawn Care Practices

While rain gardens and native plants are better at soaking up water than a traditional lawn, a **healthy** lawn is better at soaking up water than an unhealthy lawn or pavement.

Adjust your expectations: A perfect, clean and green lawn might look nice, but it likely contributes to water quality problems.

Follow these better lawn care practices for a healthier lawn, preventing stormwater runoff.



Better Lawn Care Practices: Lawn Waste & Runoff

Yard waste and fertilizer contain nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen. Follow the label instructions, and the 4R's of Nutrient Stewardship: Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time, Right Place.

When handled incorrectly, nutrients become stormwater runoff, and they contribute to algae blooms and invasive aquatic weeds in our waterways.

Excessive algae and invasive aquatic weeds remove oxygen from water, suffocating some aquatic critters. Plus, they reduce opportunities for recreational access or use.



Yard waste and lawn clippings entering waterways can lead to algal blooms.



Better Lawn Care Practices: Watering

Keep your lawn green this summer by watering **1" of water per week.**

Use a rain gauge to measure.

Check with your water company to see if they have a watering schedule.

OR

Don't water at all. Let it go dormant to save water and time.

Most healthy lawns will recover from dormancy without watering during the drought period!

Not Dead – Just Dormant!

Better Lawn Care Practices: Aeration

Consider aeration in spring and fall. It improves compacted soil, water and nutrient penetration, and thickens your lawn by allowing deeper root growth.



Better Lawn Care Practices: Mow High, Let it Lie

Set mower blades to the **highest** setting (3 to 4"). Tall grass = deep roots and fewer weeds. Mow more than once a week to avoid removing too much at one time which will stress out your grass.

Sharpen mower blades yearly for a nice, clean cut. Dull blades chew, tear and rip grass, stressing it out. Stressed grass is more likely to die and experience disease or pests.



Better Lawn Care Practices: Leave the Leaves

Improve your lawn and soil by leaving organic materials like lawn clippings, mulched leaves or compost on your lawn, putting nutrients right back into your soil.

However, keep these nutrient rich materials out of waterways by keeping them out of storm drains and off hard surfaces.



Better Lawn Care Practices: Fall is for Fertilization

- 4R's of Nutrient Stewardship: Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time, Right Place
- Fertilize your lawn in the fall for best results.
- Choose the right fertilizer for your soil. Get a soil testing bag from our office (cost is \$25).
- Check the weather. Don't fertilize yet if it is going to rain within the next couple of days.
- Follow the label and instructions. Keep it off hard surfaces to prevent runoff.



RIGHT SOURCE

Matches fertilizer type to crop needs.



RIGHT RATE

Matches amount of fertilizer to crop needs.



RIGHT TIME

Makes nutrients available when crops need them.



RIGHT PLACE

Keeps nutrients where crops can use them.

Del-Aware Backyard Rebates: Next Steps

- **Take the Quiz & Submit for Voucher**
 - Now that you have learned about backyard conservation practices, it's time to take our online quiz.
- **Submit for Voucher**
 - Your results will be emailed to Erin Fisher, Communications & Outreach Coordinator, efisher@co.delaware.oh.us. If you have issues with the quiz form, you may email Erin with your name, address, phone number, and your question or concern.
- **Receive Voucher**
 - After we receive your information, we will manually check your information to make sure you live in an area that's eligible for the program. If eligible, we will email you a voucher for your rebate, along with detailed instructions and rules on how to redeem it.

Please allow about two weeks from the time you take the quiz/submit for voucher before receiving your voucher.



Del-Aware Backyard Rebates: How to Get Your Rebate

Depending on your home's municipality, rebates are available for:

- Rain Barrels
- Native Plants

Once you receive your voucher, you can take a digital or physical copy directly to a participating vendor and present it for an immediate discount (no reimbursement, just \$50 off at the time of purchase).

Rebate Rules:

- **You must pay tax out of your own pocket.** More details will be shared when we send you your voucher and program rules.
- **The full \$50 must be used.** This is for ease and simplicity of administering this pilot program.
- **One rebate per household per year.**
- **Use your voucher before it expires** (12/1/2026). Expired vouchers will **not** be accepted due to limited funding.
- **Immediate Vendor discounts only.** For ease and simplicity of this pilot program, we are only allowing immediate discounts with participating vendors. This is one difference between our program and Franklin SWCD's program.

Delaware
Soil and Water
Conservation District



Thank you to our Vendors!

Conserve On!

Del-Aware Backyard Rebates

Erin Fisher

Communications & Outreach Coordinator
Delaware Soil & Water Conservation District

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740-368-1921

soilandwater.co.delaware.oh.us/del-aware-backyard-rebates

Special thanks to Franklin SWCD for creating
this program!

www.CommunityBackyards.org

