



## Improper Disposal of Yard Waste Can Put You Out of Business!

*Here's how to keep eco-conscious clients happy and comply with city regulations.*

Residents and businesses are becoming more and more aware of the impact improper disposal of yard waste has on their landscape, wallet, and local lakes, rivers, streams, and creeks. As their lawn care company, clients may be asking you to leave their yard waste on the lawn, and if you don't, you may need to look for business elsewhere.



### Improve your clients' landscape with less work!

Grass clippings and leaves are truly a valuable natural resource. Grass clippings left on the lawn will provide up to 25% of your lawn's total fertilizer needs, and leaves contain 50 to 80% of the nutrients a plant extracts from the soil and air during the season. To keep these nutrients where they will nourish the lawn, mulch grass clippings and leaves and leave them on the lawn, or compost them.

### Save your clients' money!

During the year, at least 20% of the solid waste generated by Texans comes from grass clippings, tree leaves, and other yard wastes. Bagging these materials and placing them into the curbside garbage collection system uses valuable landfill space and costs residents more in increased taxes and service fees.

Clogged storm drains also use up tax dollars. A nearby storm drain may become clogged if grass clippings and/or leaves are swept or blown into the storm drain. Clogged storm drains may cause flooding and requires that the city come out and clean the storm drain. Ask your clients if they would prefer to have their tax dollars spent on cleaning out a storm drain or fixing a pothole in the street.

By leaving grass clippings and fallen tree leaves on your lawn, you are supplying it with natural fertilizers, meaning your clients spend less money on fertilizer application and you also save money, time, and energy.

### Be environmentally-friendly!

Yard waste left in the street, sidewalk, or driveway, or dumped, blown, or swept into the storm drain will eventually wash into nearby creeks, streams, rivers, and lakes during a storm or by water runoff from watering your lawn. Yard waste in a local waterway depletes the oxygen level in the water, which is harmful to aquatic life. Improperly applied chemical fertilizers, as well as organic amendments, used on the lawn also wash down the storm drain and negatively impact aquatic life, so by helping your clients use their yard waste as a natural fertilizer, you can help reduce storm water pollution.

### Properly dispose of yard waste.

When your clients ask you to leave the yard waste on the lawn, be prepared. Here's what you should do:

- Remove yard waste from the streets, sidewalks, and driveways. Blow or sweep grass clippings or tree leaves back up into the yard where they can help provide additional nutrients to your lawn.
- Don't Bag It™! Use grass clippings or fallen leaves as mulch or shred them and use them to fertilize the lawn and protect landscape plants from extreme weather. Mulching mowers and blades make this easy. (But be sure to clean up any yard waste that gets into the street).
- If the clients have a compost bin, add the yard waste to that bin.



For more information on proper lawn care contact City of San Juan, 709 S. Nebraska, San Juan, Texas 78589, [xcervantes@cityofsanjuantexas.com](mailto:xcervantes@cityofsanjuantexas.com), (956) 702-6429, or [www.stormwater.tamuk.edu](http://www.stormwater.tamuk.edu).

# THE DIRTY DOZEN

## 12 Tips to Prevent Storm Water Pollution



- 💧 Turn off your sprinklers when it rains to avoid water runoff.
- 💧 Pick up and bag your pet's waste! Leaving waste on the ground increases public health risks by allowing harmful bacterial and nutrients to wash into the storm drain and into your local waters.
- 💧 Do not apply fertilizers and pesticides before it rains. Contrary to popular belief, the rain will not help soak chemicals into the ground; instead, it creates polluted runoff into your local waters.
- 💧 Select native or adapted plants and grasses that are drought tolerant and pest resistant; these plants will require less water, fertilizer and pesticides.
- 💧 Reduce the amount of paved area and increase the amount of vegetated area in your yard.
- 💧 Do not dump your car's oil on the ground or in the storm drain; dispose of it properly at an oil-recycling center.
- 💧 Check your car, boat or motorcycle for leaks. Clean up spilled fluids with an absorbent material; do not rinse it into the storm drain.
- 💧 Compost or mulch your yard waste rather than bagging it, which fills up the landfill, or even worse, sweeping it into the street to get carried in runoff to the storm drain. Excess yard waste in our water depletes oxygen for aquatic life.
- 💧 Wash your car with water only or use biodegradable soap to avoid runoff of harmful chemicals and try to wash your car on a lawn or other unpaved surface. To conserve water, use a bucket or hose equipped with a shut-off nozzle. Better yet, use a commercial carwash that recycles its water!
- 💧 Dispose of your paint and other household wastes at recycling facilities or events; do not throw excess household chemicals and waste on the street or in the storm drain.
- 💧 Do not pump your pool water into the street or storm drain; pool chemicals can be hazardous to aquatic habitats. Drain your pool into the sanitary sewer system where it can be treated.
- 💧 Don't mess with Texas! Throw your litter in a garbage can and recycle what you can!



This message is brought to you by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (TPDES) Storm Water Task Force, its Public Education and Outreach Subcommittee, the Arroyo Colorado Watershed Partnership ([www.arroyocolorado.org](http://www.arroyocolorado.org)), and Texas A&M University-Kingsville ([www.stormwater.tamuk.edu](http://www.stormwater.tamuk.edu)). Contact your local City Engineering or Public Works Department for more information.

