



# What happens to the Rain?

You probably don't realize that the rain falling on homes, lawns and driveways eventually finds its way into bayous, lakes and rivers, carrying our pollution with it. Landscaping your property is one way to help reduce the erosive force of all this unwanted runoff.

What you do with and on your land directly affects the quality of this runoff. You and your neighbors can unintentionally change the volume, velocity and timing of the surface runoff that flows from your property, and, by your everyday actions, you can add to the amount of toxic chemicals and nutrients that flow into our waterways. As the volume of runoff increases, so does the danger of surface flooding. Runoff also increases soil erosion, which delivers more sediment to the bayous, rivers and lakes.

## Protect your Property

If everyone followed a few simple procedures, they could retain more rainwater on their property, replenish groundwater supplies, reduce their reliance on household chemicals and fertilizers, and generally improve water quality.

Planting trees is one way you can protect your land from the damage caused by excessive runoff and erosion. Few of us realize that trees help reduce runoff and minimize erosion. Planting shrubs, trees and ground cover on your property -- landscaping -- has definite environmental benefits, and it enhances the appearance and value of your property. These plants can block cold winter winds and provide shade in summer. Trees, shrubs and ground cover also require less maintenance than grass. Because trees and shrubs require less fertilizer and fewer herbicides than grass, the chances of polluting are reduced.

## Choosing Appropriate Plants

Fortunately, nature has given us a partial solution to the problem of plant selection. Over time, plants native to a particular area have adapted to whatever growing conditions they encounter. Plants that grow naturally in your area or region are bothered less by common disease and insect problems than plants introduced from other areas. Ask a competent, professional nursery employee or your local Cooperative Extension Service office to help you select plants, trees and shrubs appropriate for your yard and soil type.

Some introduced plants may grow bigger and faster than plants native to your region. These plants might spread quickly and become a nuisance. Introducing new plants often entails more watering or chemical spraying. One way to avoid these potential problems is to select native plants, those pre-adapted to the growing conditions in your neighborhood.



## What You Can Do

By following these few simple guidelines, you can make your home more attractive and help prevent erosion and polluted runoff.

- Landscape your yard to minimize rainwater runoff.
- Preserve the established trees in your neighborhood. They help minimize the damage caused by surface runoff.
- Choose the appropriate plants, shrubs and trees for the soil in your yard.
- Don't select plants that need lots of watering. (This increases surface runoff.)
- Consult your local Cooperative Extension Service office or a local nursery for advice on which plants, shrubs and trees will grow well in your yard.

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