



Indian River County Stormwater Division
772-226-1565
Pollution Reporting Hotline 226-1888 or online at
www.ircStormwater.com

10 Things you can do to Reduce Polluted Runoff

We all have an impact on the health of our watersheds. Our daily actions on our own properties, including how we care for our yards and dispose of our waste may seem unimportant, but these small actions have can a huge effect across an entire watershed. There are many ways you can help improve your watershed. Here are our* top ten with informational resources.

1. Redirect your downspout. Redirect your gutter's downspouts so they discharge directly onto your lawn or garden and not onto impervious areas that drain into the street. Rain from your rooftop's gutters may flow out into the street and eventually to the storm sewer or a waterbody. You can easily redirect the flow so it goes instead to your yard or garden, simply by realigning the discharge or by adding an extension.

2. Install a rain barrel. Capture your rooftop runoff and store it for future use to water your garden or wash your car. A good Florida resource on this topic is <http://www.tappwater.org/download-guides/RainBarrelGuide.pdf>

3. Install a rain garden. Rain gardens are landscaped depressions that capture and slowly infiltrate runoff from your rooftop, lawn, or a paved surface. They not only remove pollutants but are a beautiful alternative to lawns. At present, Indian River County does not have a County-specific resource on rain gardens. However, a good Florida resource on this topic is <http://www.tappwater.org/download-guides/RainGarden.pdf>

4. Plant a tree. Trees provide oxygen to breathe, clean the air of pollution, reduce runoff, and when located properly can even lower heating and cooling costs. If you have a lake on your property, consider planting trees along the shoreline to stabilize the banks, provide shade, and filter pollutants from runoff. Watch this [video on how to plant a tree](#) (the right way) by Planting America. Learn more about planting and maintaining trees in urban areas at <http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu/pdfs/fyn/tree-planting.PDF>. Determine the best trees to plant at <http://lyra.ifas.ufl.edu/FloridaTrees/FloridaTreeSelector.swf>. Order trees from the [National Arbor Day Foundation](#). In Indian River County, the Indian River Soil & Water Conservation District <http://www.ircdd.com/SWCD/Index.htm> often conducts tree sales and tree planting programs.

5. Landscape with native plants. Native plants require less water and fertilizer and are more resistant to pests and disease since they are already adapted to local conditions. [National Wildlife Federation information on attracting wildlife with native plants](#) includes links to regional lists of native plants, sample landscape plans, and more. Practical information for Florida property-owners is also available at www.FloridaYards.org.

6. If you have a lawn, make it a low-input one. This means managing your lawn to use the least amount of water, fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides possible, which also translates into low inputs of your own dollars! Practical information for Florida property-owners is available at www.FloridaYards.org. The soil in Indian River County is basically sand so it is recommended to first do a soil test to determine the types and quantities of nutrients each lawn needs. Homeowners are encouraged to call the Indian River County Extension office 770-5030 ext. 1 to learn the directions on how to receive a free pH soil test.

7. Pick up after your dog. Dispose of pet waste properly by putting it in the trash in a sealed biodegradable bag, or burying it in your yard. Indian River County encourages citizens to not dispose of pet waste in their septic systems. For more information visit the EPA pet waste website http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/index.cfm?action=factsheet_results&view=specific&bmp=4

8. Maintain your septic system. Have your septic system inspected every two to three years by a licensed septic tank service contractor and pumped as recommended by the inspector (generally every 3-5 years). Septic system failures can be costly and also contaminate groundwater and nearby surface waters. [A Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems](#), a brochure developed by the EPA details all you need to know about your septic system and its maintenance. For specific questions contact the Florida Department of Environmental Health in Indian River County - 772-794-7440, <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdindianriver/index.htm>

9. Properly dispose of household hazardous wastes. This includes paints, solvents, used motor oil, pesticides, herbicides, cleaning products, unused medicine, and more. These substances should be disposed of at a household hazardous waste collection program or recycling facility, and should never be discarded in the trash, sink, or storm drain. To locate a recycling center near you to dispose of these materials, call the IRC Solid Waste Disposal District at 770-5113. Learn more about how to safely handle and dispose of hazardous materials at [EPA's website on Household Hazardous Waste](#). To learn about what's in these products, potential health effects, and safety and handling visit the US Department of Health and Human Services' [Household Products Database](#) .

10. Join a local watershed organization! Visit the list of Volunteer Opportunities in Indian River County at www.ircStormwater.com and EPA's [Surf Your Watershed](#) to find a watershed organization near you.

* Source for many of the tips: The Center for Watershed Protection <http://www.cwp.org/your-watershed-101/what-you-can-do.html>