



## Yard Waste & Water Quality

**How can something as natural as yard waste impact our water quality?** In nature, a balance forms between growth and decay and when a natural system (such as a stream habitat) becomes out of balance the system becomes dysfunctional. When a stream habitat has to process more decaying vegetation than it naturally generates, the system becomes unhealthy. *Leaves, grass clippings, twigs and other yard waste are naturally composed of nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. Dumping these excess nutrients into a nearby stream (storm drain, ditch or lake) disrupts the stream's ability to keep itself healthy which degrades the water quality and aquatic life.* It causes things like algae to grow much larger than they should, depleting the oxygen in the water and making it difficult for stream life to survive. **But the good news is you can reuse it as free fertilizer on your yard and gardens!**

### Save Money by COMPOSTING & Help Keep Our Water Clean!



1. Compost yard waste in a home-made or purchased compost bin and create reusable, free fertile soil for your lawn or garden.
2. Use a mulching mower. This reapplies the clippings (and nutrients) back onto the yard which helps feed the lawn, retain moisture and protects from the hot sun. Mow in different directions each week to prevent thatch build up.
3. Keep your grass at least **3** inches long to reduce the amount of clippings. Taller plants grow longer roots which keeps the grass & soil healthier and more drought resistant.
4. Blow your leaves on top of your gardens for winter cover. This protects perennial roots from cold temps and adds free nutrients to your garden as they decay.
5. Take your yard waste to the City of Urbana's new compost facility located at 1261 Muzzy Rd. Call 937-652-4300 or visit [urbanaohio.com](http://urbanaohio.com) for details.

**The City also has a new street sweeping contractor as part of their stormwater pollution prevention program to decrease the amount of metal toxins, paint, trash and other pollutants generated from road debris.**

#### Resources

- [gardenseason.com](http://gardenseason.com)
- [compostguide.com](http://compostguide.com)
- University of Minnesota Ext. - [tinyurl.com/jagyt8o](http://tinyurl.com/jagyt8o)
- OSU Extension — [tinyurl.com/z94vxcd](http://tinyurl.com/z94vxcd)
- [howtocompost.org](http://howtocompost.org)