

KEEP YOUR YARD WASTE DRY

CHAD EDGAR, URBAN STREAM SPECIALIST

Spring, summer and fall in Lake County usually keep homeowners busy with mulching, weeding, mowing, raking and many other yard duties. Some relish in the task and enjoy working outside in the fresh air; some would rather install turf grass and be done with the mosquitoes and humidity. Regardless of your inclinations, having a yard means that you have yard waste. Yard waste includes grass clippings, fallen leaves, fallen branches, last year's annuals and maybe even some deposits from man's best friend. What to do with all of this waste? Many prefer to compost these materials to re-use in their flower and vegetable gardens, as these items decompose they create a nutrient rich soil. Others prefer to dispose of them at their curbside; or if no such services exist to drop them off at participating facilities (nurseries or planned community "drop-off" days). All of the above are perfectly acceptable solutions to disposing of yard waste. Do you or anyone you know dispose of yard waste by dumping into a nearby river or stream? Many think that dumping "natural" materials into rivers and streams may actually be helpful. Quite the contrary, yard wastes dumped into water bodies is not an acceptable practice for many reasons.

Piles of grass clippings, leaves and sticks on slopes acts like mulch in our flower beds. This material retains moisture and prevents the growth of vegetation; bare and wet are prime conditions for soil erosion to take place on steep slopes. Once the erosion process begins it is often very difficult and very expensive to stop. Houses and other structures can be put at risk of collapse, and the extra sediment is discharged into the water body. Sediment pollution is not only harmful to fish and aquatic insects, but it also causes flooding, erosion, and drinking water problems. When yard waste is dumped into the river/stream it begins to decompose. The process of decomposition removes the oxygen dissolved in the water necessary for fish and insects who breathe through gills. In addition it adds fine material to the water column which often gets deposited on the floodplains and fills in the pool areas of streams. This results in higher floodwater stages and erosion of streamside property.

SWCD technicians can assist you in how to properly dispose of yard waste. Please contact us at 350-2730 to schedule a site visit.