



JEFFCO H₂O NEWS

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You've Got WHAT Under the Sink???



Or maybe it's that stuff collecting dust in the corner of the garage. You know what we're talking about: rusting cans of paint (did you really paint the walls that color?), fertilizer that's so old it has hardened into a brick, drain cleaner that they don't even make anymore, unlabeled jars of something you can't remember saving. Just know that you are not alone! The average American household stores a whopping 100 pounds of [household hazardous waste](#) within the home. The problem is that when it's time to do some spring cleaning, many of these products should not be thrown away in the regular household trash, or may need to be handled in a specific way first. Bringing those items that will be accepted to a Household Hazardous Waste Day event is a great option for proper disposal. But the best long term solution is to carefully plan out what you need to accomplish a task or complete a project, buy the least toxic product available, and only purchase what is needed to get the job done. If you buy a product in a large quantity, be sure that you will be able to use it all over a set period of time. It's also important to pay attention to how the container should be discarded when it is empty. In some cases, empty containers that contained chemicals such as pesticides should carefully be [rinsed before proper disposal](#).

What's Happening?

AL People Against a Littered State (PALS) Spring Cleanup - Want to make a difference in your community? Consider organizing or participating in a volunteer roadside litter cleanup. Last year, 1009 [volunteers](#) participated in 35 cleanups, removing 65 tons of litter and trash from roadways in unincorporated Jefferson County. Several of these volunteers received [statewide awards](#) for their efforts. Cleanup resources such as flyers, gloves, bags, safety t-shirts, traffic control and trash disposal are available for FREE to unincorporated Jefferson County Communities. Call 325-8741 to learn how your community can participate.

Tree Seedling Giveaway - February 25 - Linn Park - FREE tree seedlings ready for planting 8 am - 3 pm. For more information, call 787-5222.

24th Annual Plant Dig - February 27 - New Georgia Landfill - Dig up FREE plants from 8 am - 1 pm. Call 781-0598 to learn more. A free workshop is offered on February 20 8am -10am at Birmingham Botanical Gardens to learn how to identify and harvest the plants at the plant dig. Visit [bbgardens.org](#) for details.

Household Hazardous Waste Day - March 19 - Legion Field - McLendon Park - This FREE event is open to all Jefferson County residents 9 am - 12 noon or until capacity is met. Click [HERE](#) for a list of items that will be accepted.

What the Heck is a BMP?



You probably have heard the term BMP at work or in some other context. And you may have seen a BMP in practice - silt fencing installed around a construction site to prevent soil from leaving the property. BMP stands for Best Management Practice which is a tried and true technique or guideline to either accomplish or prevent something in the most efficient and effective manner. We all use BMPs in our everyday lives, often without realizing it. Washing white clothes separately from dark clothes, bringing water to a boil before adding pasta, changing the oil in the car at the recommended intervals - these are all BMPs. When BMPs are not followed, some of the resulting practices can result in increased polluted runoff being carried into surface waterways, some of which are drinking water sources. With about 663,000 people living in Jefferson County, we actually have a great deal of influence over the quality of water flowing in local rivers, creeks, lakes and streams. Our actions can either improve or degrade these water resources. One of the most powerful BMPs to reduce the impact of many common products on water quality is to [follow label directions](#) before using them. In other words, the label is the law!

Following the directions and paying attention to any warnings when [purchasing, using, storing](#), and disposing of products such as yard chemicals, household cleaners, paints, solvents, and vehicle fluids can make a positive difference in your community's health and safety, protect water resources, and reduce pollution.

A Dirty Little Secret



Spring is just around the corner, and with it comes the start of the growing season. Maybe you have plans to reconfigure your landscape, install some new plants, or build a patio or deck in your yard. Since most improvements or changes to the landscape involve some type of land disturbance, it's important to factor in how to prevent soil from being exposed to the elements while your project is being implemented. Soil and the things that live in it and because of it make up a [complex web](#) of interdependency. Without soil, most living things would cease to exist. Wind and rain can leach away from bare [soil](#) valuable nutrients that nourish plants. Rain also can erode soil, creating sediment in creeks and streams which kills aquatic wildlife and fills in streambeds, causing flooding. Soil particles attract and bond with yard chemicals, so these chemicals tag along with eroded soil and can end up in local waterways where they harm water quality, aquatic plants, and animals. If you have dug up the soil for a small project but can't complete it right away, you can cover the exposed soil with a tarp and secure the edges, or install a layer of mulch to help hold soil in place until the project can be completed. If

you are going to implement a project that involves digging up, filling in, or grading large amounts of soil, you may be required to obtain a [land disturbance activity permit](#) and implement some additional BMPs. To find out if the project you are planning requires a permit, call 325-8741.

Fixer Upper Downer



Updating your home can be an exciting and worthwhile endeavor. When the work is done and you are admiring the results, it's easy not to give much thought to the impact paint, [demoed materials](#), new construction materials, and the cleanup process might have had on the environment. Paint, solvents, dust, adhesives, and other [by-products of construction](#) can wind up in the local stormwater drainage system when left outside uncovered and exposed to rain. With a little [research](#) and [planning](#), your home improvement project can have great results as well as be stormwater friendly. Choosing materials with the least overall impact to the environment is an important part of the planning process. Some considerations include the sustainability of the material sources; the energy used in their extraction, manufacture and transportation; their potential health effects; and the disposal options available. For example, low VOC water based paint is the least toxic formulation and requires just soap and water to clean brushes, containers and spills. Leftover water based paints can be stored in jars with tight lids for touchups, taken to a household hazardous waste day for disposal, or allowed to dry out (adding some clean cat litter

can help) and placed in the regular trash. In a renovation, old cabinets, doors, windows, appliances, countertops, fixtures, and many other materials can be kept intact and [donated](#) to a charity for reuse or, if in bad shape, [recycled](#) at a location which properly disposes of these items. If you are doing the work yourself, you can save money by looking for ways to repurpose materials by deconstructing rather than demoing them whenever possible. Brick from a fireplace redo can be repurposed as a garden walkway, and old kitchen cabinets can have a second life in the garage as a storage unit. During construction, it's important for both debris and new materials stored outside to be kept covered to protect them from rain and located away from paved areas to avoid the leaching or washing of materials into the storm drainage system, since some construction materials contain metals or chemicals that must be kept out of waterways. If you plan to hire a contractor for your remodel, be sure to ask if they use products with the least impact to the environment; plan to reduce waste by reusing or salvaging materials and recycling debris; and will properly handle, contain, and dispose of adhesives, solvents, and other construction waste.

To report suspected water pollution in unincorporated Jefferson County, call 205.325.5792!

If you have questions, comments, or want to schedule a presentation for your community or organization in unincorporated Jefferson County, email diclementel@jccal.org or call 325.8741.