

# Keep Our Water Clean

**Home and garden pesticides and fertilizers are polluting California's waterways.** Problems occur when people pour garden chemicals down drains or when chemical residues wash into gutters, storm drains, and streams by rain, garden watering, or cleaning up with the garden hose. Garden chemicals not only threaten aquatic life; they can also affect the quality of our drinking water. Follow these tips to keep our rivers, creeks, and oceans clean.

## What can you do to protect water quality?

- ◆ **Limit pesticide use.** Use nonchemical methods or least-toxic pesticides wherever possible. Ask a UC Master Gardener for help with pest problems.
- ◆ **Avoid using pyrethroid insecticides.** These products, which include bifenthrin, cypermethrin, and permethrin, are among the most toxic to aquatic animals.
- ◆ **Control ants** by reducing food sources, excluding them from homes, and using baits in containers, instead of spraying. **Don't use insecticides for lawn insects** unless you are sure insects are causing the damage.
- ◆ **Cut back on fertilizer.** More is not better. Actively growing turf, flowering shrubs, and some annuals and fruit trees require regular feeding but ornamental trees don't. **Use a mulching mower** to recycle lawn clippings and reduce fertilizer applications.
- ◆ **Use slow-release fertilizers,** including composted organic fertilizers, which are less likely to move into water. Be sure to measure and apply them according to label directions.
- ◆ **Don't let fertilizer or pesticides get onto hard surfaces** such as sidewalks or driveways. Sweep any material that accidentally lands on hard surfaces back onto the lawn.
- ◆ **Dispose of garden chemicals correctly.** Never sweep, hose off, or pour leftover pesticides or fertilizers into drains or gutters. Dispose of unused products at your local household hazardous waste site.

## Reduce runoff by making your landscape water efficient.

- ◆ **Reduce your landscape's need for water.** Choose water-efficient plants and garden designs.
- ◆ **Minimize runoff by using mulches** in beds and permeable materials for walkways and driveways. Aerate and add organic matter such as compost to heavy or compacted soils. Install terraces or other features on slopes to keep water on site.
- ◆ **Check and maintain your irrigation system** so water doesn't run off your landscape onto hard surfaces and into gutters.
- ◆ **Improve watering efficiency and distribution** by using equipment such as drip irrigation, soaker hoses, and "smart" irrigation controllers and rotor heads.



Illustrations by Celeste Rusconi

**Minimize the use of pesticides that pollute our waterways. Use nonchemical alternatives or less toxic pesticide products whenever possible. Read product labels carefully and follow instructions on proper use, storage, and disposal.**

For more information about managing pests, contact your **University of California Cooperative Extension office** listed under the county government pages of your phone book or visit the UC IPM Web site at [ipm.ucanr.edu](http://ipm.ucanr.edu).

**What you use in your landscape affects our rivers and oceans!**

Call 1-800-CLEANUP  
(1-800-253-2687)  
for a disposal site near you!



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