A pipeline connects your lawn to the river!

Polluted runoff, or STORMWATER, occurs when rain or melted snow flows over the ground and picks up dirt, bacteria, oil and chemicals from streets, sidewalks, driveways, and yards. Stormwater flows directly into our local waterways and impacts the health of the people, fish and wildlife that rely on that water.

Filthy water cannot be washed.
— West African proverb

For More Information

Regional Coalition for Clean Rivers and Streams
www.cleanriversandstreams.org/

EPA—Do’s and Don’ts Around the Home water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/dosdont.cfm

OSU Extension—Lawn care extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/
and search “lawn”

EPA—Using Pesticides Safely www.epa.gov/pesticides/health/safely.htm/

King County—Grow Smart, Grow Safe www.growsmartgrow-safe.org/

Lawn Chemicals and Clean Water

What you can do to create healthy lawns, streams and families.

City of Albany
Environmental Services
541-791-0087
www.cityofalbany.net
Rev 1/27/2014
Know the Facts

When lawn chemicals are applied improperly, they run off into streams and lakes, polluting our drinking water and harming fish, reptiles, and other wildlife. The three types of lawn chemicals are Fertilizers, Herbicides and Pesticides.

Fertilizers

Fertilizers usually contain nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), and potassium (K). NITROGEN is important for the growth of your lawn, but over-applying can contaminate groundwater with nitrates. POTASSIUM is sometimes mixed with chloride, which is harmful to aquatic life. PHOSPHOROUS is not very important for your lawn and can be devastating to lakes and streams.

Fertilizers in streams cause:
- Decreased water clarity
- Foul odors
- Too much aquatic plant and algae growth
- Very low oxygen conditions
- Fish and other organisms die or have to leave.

Herbicides & Pesticides

Chemical pesticides that are applied to kill nuisance insects and weeds often poison fish, wildlife and other beneficial organisms. Over-application of pesticides can result in runoff.
- Pose a threat to our health when we eat diseased fish
- Cause reproductive and growth problems in fish even when they don’t kill them
- Contain surfactants, which disrupt growth hormones in animals.
- Many are known or suspected cancer-causing agents
- Harm or kill unintended plants and animals, maybe even your pets!

If you choose to use lawn chemicals, always follow the label instructions and keep them off paved areas. Spot spray your weeds and take care not to track any residue indoors.
Most importantly, do not over-apply!

Dozens of herbicide and insecticide compounds have been found in streams and lakes across the nation. (US Geological Circular 1225)

78 million US households use home and garden pesticides. (EPA 2004 study)

What Can You Do?

You can protect the water quality of our lakes and streams while still maintaining a healthy lawn and garden.
- Use phosphorus-free fertilizers. They have a zero as the middle number such as 10-0-10.
- Leave a buffer or sweep chemicals away from slopes and edges so chemicals will not wash into nearby lakes and streams.
- Never use lawn chemicals when a heavy rain is expected.
- Get your soil tested by OSU Extension Service Master Gardeners – maybe you don’t need to fertilize.

Natural Lawn Care

Natural lawn care works with your soil and plants to create thick grass that discourages weeds and promotes growth of an extensive, drought-resistant root system.
- Build and maintain healthy soil with compost and mulch
- Use organic fertilizers and pesticides as natural alternatives.
- Plant native or drought-resistant plants that can grow without a lot of additional water and fertilizers.