

# from gray days to green ways?

How can we make the most of our region's rainy weather to reduce pollution and improve the environment?

JULY 2008—For the Cleveland area, June is the rainiest month of the year, averaging almost four inches of precipitation. Because large volumes of stormwater impact streams and sewers, residents may experience more frequent problems, such as flooding and stream-bank erosion.

There is work being done and steps you can take to alleviate some of these personal-property and community issues. The result might be fewer headaches, a reduction in flooding, and a cleaner environment.

## WHAT'S BEING DONE

### **Stormwater management program planning**

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District is continuing its meetings with its 61 member communities, discussing the regional benefits of a stormwater management program coordinated by the Sewer District. This program would coordinate and integrate the efforts of numerous communities and environmental agencies to address stormwater problems and reap regional benefits.

Once all communities have provided input during this process, the Sewer District will use this data to refine its stormwater management program proposal. Much of the effort will include identifying the resources and services needed, before presenting a final recommendation to the Sewer District's Board of Trustees and member communities.

*Local resources: [www.neorsd.org/stormwater](http://www.neorsd.org/stormwater)*

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### **Rain barrels save water, money**

By capturing the rainwater from rooftops of homes and garages, rain barrels reduce the volume and velocity of stormwater entering storm sewers and streams, and can provide a natural source of water for gardens or other residential needs.

A rain barrel can save a homeowner hundreds of gallons of water during peak summer months.

While many communities in the Cleveland area do not permit residents to disconnect their downspouts from the storm drain (property-owners should check with the local building department), a diverter system can capture rain water and route it back to the storm sewer when the barrel becomes too full.

*Local resources: Nature Center at Shaker Lakes (216) 321-5935 | Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District (216) 524-6580*

### **Rain gardens beautify yards while filtering pollutants**

As a low-maintenance landscaping alternative to traditional lawns, rain gardens also serve as a natural filter for stormwater runoff. They can be easy to create and can work virtually anywhere, especially around driveways or walks, in the corner of yards, or near roof-downspout discharges.

*Local resources: Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District (216) 524-6580 | Cleveland Museum of Natural History*

### **Plant a tree, reduce pollution**

Trees absorb large amounts of water, as well as water-polluting nitrates, phosphorus, and potassium, leading the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Center for Watershed Protection to declare that trees are the best use of land for water storage, runoff and pollutant reduction, and wildlife-species diversity.

Planting native trees also supports the ecological integrity of the region.

*Local resources: Cleveland Museum of Natural History [[www.cmnh.org](http://www.cmnh.org)] > Conservation > Landscaping with native plants]*

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District's Linda Mayer-Mack contributed to this story.