

Keep Yard Waste Away from Streams

Dumping of yard clippings, leaves, and other debris into stream valleys and floodplains is a serious problem and is often illegal under state and local floodplain and water quality ordinances.

- Yard waste like leaves, grass, and brush piled along stream edges suffocates and kills the trees and shrubs that are critical for avoiding stream bank erosion.
- Yard waste piled along streams can easily be washed into streams during large rain events. Once in the stream, this burst of organic material contributes a harmful excess of nutrients, which in turn robs the stream of oxygen needed by fish and aquatic insects. Oxygen depletion can be observed for a long distance downstream of these localized deposits of yard waste and ultimately compound in Delaware Bay.
- Leaves and other yard waste raked into streets often wash into storm drains, causing flooding, impeding stream flow, and creating areas of stagnant water that may create mosquito problems.

A few tips for handling yard waste:

- DO follow your county and municipal schedules for drop off or collection of yard waste. DO NOT use plastic or paper grocery bags, only paper yard waste bags.
- DO compost leaves or yard waste whenever possible. Find out more about composting and yard disposal from the Chester County Solid Waste Authority (<http://www.chestercountyswa.org/>) or Delaware County Solid Waste Authority (<http://www.co.delaware.pa.us/SWA/>).
- DO NOT burn leaves. Burning results in air pollution and is now prohibited by most municipalities.
- DO NOT remove leaves and other woody debris from the ground in natural areas of your property, which may include hedgerows and forested areas. Leaves and down woody material provide a great source of food and nutrients for microorganisms that are critical to maintaining healthy soils and plants.



Photo source: CRC; Yard waste blocking a culvert