

This year, the Town of Topsfield has partnered with Greenscapes North Shore, a program coordinated by three organizations from across the North Shore — Salem Sound Coastwatch, Ipswich River Watershed Association, and Eight Towns and the Great Marsh Committee — to educate its citizens on the importance of minimizing stormwater runoff and keeping things like pet waste, cigarette butts, fertilizers, pesticides, plastic, automobile oil and gas out of stormwater runoff.

Stormwater is defined as rain and snow that travels across the land to the nearest water body and doesn't sink into the ground. In order to spread the word about the importance of reducing stormwater pollution, the Greenscapes Program has created two public service announcements (PSA) for Topsfield's local cable TV station with facts and tips on how and why to prevent stormwater runoff. These PSAs will be coming to your local cable station this winter!

Why is this issue important? As we build more to accommodate a growing population and cover the land with impervious surfaces (parking lots, roads, buildings, etc.) a great deal of rain water can no longer be absorbed into the soil the way it once was. Instead it runs off, ending up in our lakes, streams and ocean. Even lawns can generate up to 90% as much runoff as pavement. In short, we have been dramatically altering the water cycle. Where once only 10% of the rain ran off the land, now upwards of 60-90% does - carrying pollution on the land with it. Stormwater is the number one source of water pollution in Massachusetts and reducing impervious surfaces is the best solution! So how can you help prevent stormwater runoff?

In your town:

- **Support open space protection especially near waterbodies.**
- **Advocate zoning/building regulations that encourage less pavement and other impervious surfaces.**
- **Support your town's efforts to clean storm drains, sweep the streets and build an effective stormwater infrastructure.**

In your yard: (Contact the Topsfield Conservation Commission office at 978-887-1510 or conservation@topsfield-ma.gov to learn how.):

- **Add compost to your soil and aerate to reduce soil compaction.**
- **Add trees, shrubs and 'natural' areas to your property - the roots are efficient water recyclers.**
- **Plant a rain garden to capture water so it soaks into the soil**
- **Use permeable pavers and porous asphalt to build walks and driveways.**
- **Use organic products in your landscape to reduce the amount of harmful chemicals leaving your property through stormwater runoff**

Help the town of Topsfield spread the word about stormwater pollution! Tell your friends to look out for the Stormwater PSAs on your local cable station this winter.

This article was created by the Greenscapes North Shore Program, a coalition of three non-profit organizations working to encourage environmentally-friendly landscaping and yard care practices. The Greenscapes North Shore Coalition is made up of Salem Sound Coastwatch, Ipswich River Watershed Association, and Eight Towns and the Bay Committee. For more information and to sign up for the Greenscapes email newsletter, visit www.Greencscapes.org .