

Disconnect Your Downspout

Downspout disconnection is an easy and important method of preventing combined sewer overflows and hence eliminating raw sewage from entering the Don. Redirecting roof drains to a grassed or permeable area has an immediate impact on reducing combined sewer overflows in heavy rains. Homeowners can do it themselves or have the City of Toronto inspect and disconnect them for free. To arrange for a disconnection, call 416-392-1807.

After disconnecting your downspouts, install a rain barrel. They help keep stormwater out of the pipes and provide chlorine-free water for gardening in dry times. A small City rain barrel is free with a downspout disconnection or can be purchased for \$50 from City Works and Emergency Services (again, call 416-392-1807). Larger rain barrels are available from non-profit organizations, such as RiverSides Stewardship Alliance (416-392-1983) but cost a bit more. The benefit of catching rain in a barrel is that you reduce stormwater run-off from your property, which in turn reduces flooding of the river system. Every little bit makes a difference.



Call 392-1807 for a free rain barrel

S T O R M W A T E R

The 'Dirt' on Cleaning Your Car at Home

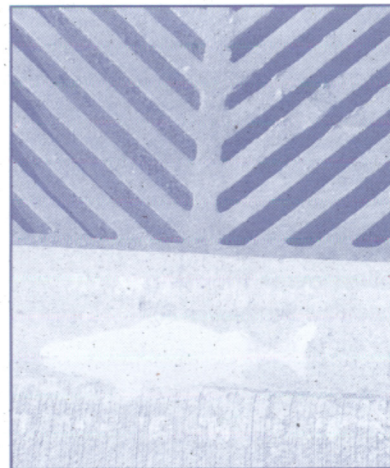
GRETHE JOHNSON, RIVERSIDES STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE

Washing your car at home is not often thought of as being hazardous to the environment. However, those who wash their cars on residential streets are contaminating waterways, like the Don River, with detergents, oil, engine grime, wax, and degreasers.

Contrary to what many people think, the dirty water produced by washing your car at home does not go to a water treatment facility. Rather, it flows down driveways, into gutters and then into storm sewer systems which end up in a nearby creek or river.

When the detergents found in car wash cleaners end up in the river system, they affect fish populations and other aquatic life. For example, detergent concentrations of 15 parts per million (ppm) are fatal to most fish. The reason that detergents (including biodegradable detergents) are so detrimental to aquatic life is because of a chemical compound, surfactant, which enables a cleaner to be rinsed off easily with water. Surfactants lower the surface tension of the water, ultimately allowing organic chemicals such as pesticides and phenols to be more easily absorbed by fish. The result is that these chemicals prevent fish species from being able to reproduce properly and so their populations decline.

The implementation of municipal bylaws that specifically address car washing on residential properties can significantly reduce the amount of pollutants entering the Don and other waterways in the Toronto Area. The simple act of driving your car to a commercial car wash can save gallons of water and reduce unnecessary pollutants from entering our rivers. Next time your car is due for a clean, keep our rivers clean and take your car to the local car wash.



Local students paint yellow fish to remind us that storm drains connect to the Don