



JEFFCO H₂O NEWS

ISSUE 25 - FALL/WINTER 2018

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Brightly Shining



Holidays are famously stressful times. That doesn't have to be the case when it comes to getting your home ready for holiday gatherings and visiting guests. Maybe your home just needs a quick cleaning to be holiday ready. Or maybe you have a few projects in mind that you would like to get done before everyone arrives to make sure your home looks its best and your guests feel welcome. From tackling top to bottom deep cleaning to an interior or exterior facelift, there are ways to keep all your projects both eco-friendly and safe for your family. When [cleaning](#), try to avoid harsh chemicals if possible. There are easy and inexpensive recipes available to make effective cleaning products using common household ingredients. If you are going to do some painting or install new fixtures or flooring, you may want to explore the many products which are sustainably sourced, are energy efficient, and do not release harmful chemicals into the air, such as low or zero VOC products. Make sure you carry your project to a great conclusion and include [donation](#) or [proper disposal](#) of any unwanted building materials.

What's Happening

Birmingham Botanical Gardens Fall Plant Sale - October 20-21 - This is a great opportunity to purchase native plants and trees just in time for the optimum planting season! Visit bbgardens.org for more information.

Birmingham City Wide Fall Cleanup - October 20 - Residents of Birmingham and Unincorporated Jefferson County, click [here](#) for details.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event - Oct 27 - Residents of Gardendale and Unincorporated Jefferson County can bring unwanted paint, electronics, batteries, appliances, and other materials to the Gardendale Civic Center for proper disposal 8:30-11:00 am. [Here's](#) what to bring.

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day - October 27 - Safely dispose of old or unwanted prescription drugs at the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Center Point Substation (2651 Center Point Road 35215) or McCalla Substation (5725 Eastern Valley Road 35111) from 10am until 2pm. For more information, click [here](#).

Ruffner Mountain Native Tree Sale - Find out how native trees and shrubs provide many benefits to your landscape in this [article](#) by Michelle Reynolds. Consider purchasing a native tree at Ruffner Mountain's sale during October - November. Visit ruffnermountain.org to learn more.

Fall, Mulch, Repeat



Well it's almost that time of year again when it becomes difficult to keep up with all the leaves that are falling or blowing into your yard. If you have not yet tried [mulching leaves](#) into your lawn rather than raking them, maybe this is the year to give it a shot. One of the first benefits you will notice is that it's a lot easier to run a mower over the leaves than it is to rake, bag and haul them. The mulched leaves will go to work for you by decomposing and producing a natural fertilizer for your lawn. And if that's not enough, one study found that mulching leaves into the lawn can reduce dandelions and crabgrass after implementing this practice for at least three years. It's important to keep up with the amount of leaves that fall into your yard and not let them get too deep before mulching. Allowing the leaves to pile up on your lawn will prevent air and sunlight from reaching the grass, and will eventually kill it. Another option is to push the fallen leaves into flower or garden beds where you can spread and use them as a mulch layer. If you have

natural areas in your yard, you may wish to allow the leaves to stay where they fall in those areas. This leaf layer is an important [habitat component](#) for many wildlife species. If you prefer to remove the leaves from your lawn, you can add them to a compost bin and create some rich organic material to use in your garden beds in the spring.

E-Waste



The holiday season is a very popular time to purchase new electronics or give them as gifts. No worries about buying the right size or color! What is worrisome is what happens to all of the electronic components and gadgets that have just been replaced. To date, only 25 states have laws which require that consumers [recycle](#) or otherwise properly dispose of old electronics. If your item is still in good working order, consider donating it to a reputable charity. Make sure to erase any personal information from phones and computers. Items such as TVs, [cell phones](#) and computers can be recycled and the majority of their components reused. Some [retailers](#) offer an electronic takeback program to assist customers with proper disposal of their electronics. One major cell phone producer recovered over 1 ton of gold worth \$40 million from recycled devices in 2015. But not all components of used electronics are recoverable in this manner. Some electronics contain highly toxic substances such as mercury, lead and cadmium which require special handling. These substances are toxic to humans and can leach out into creeks and streams if these items are improperly disposed or illegally dumped. That's why it is especially important to make sure that unwanted electronics are properly handled and components recycled whenever possible.

Divine Décor



OK, just admit it. If you are like most people, you probably have a lot of stuff sitting around just waiting to be dealt with. Before you discard or store it away never to be seen again, there is a good possibility that there could be some gems hiding among all that stuff just waiting to be rediscovered in a new way. Whether it's grandma's china, leftover building materials, or clothing that you are just one diet away from wearing again, with a little thought and creativity, many of these items can be repurposed into holiday décor that can project your style, be it rustic or elegant. There are many [websites](#) which have very creative ideas which incorporate these materials into festive elements for your home. Materials that you normally recycle such as drink bottles, cans, and boxes also can be used to make [nearly free](#) beautiful decorations for your home. Instead of typical wrapping paper, unexpected materials which are reusable can add a whimsical touch to gifts: an inexpensive holiday kitchen towel or pillow case can be used in place of gift wrap, creating a gift inside of a gift, and helping reduce the volume of trash generated during the holidays.

Watershed Spotlight



Even though we are wrapping up 2018, the Stormwater Calendar still is loaded with helpful information about your watershed. The venues featured not only are great places to visit but also play a big role in contributing to improving our [watersheds](#) and water quality. The venues featured October - December are located within the Village and Five Mile Creek Watersheds. October highlights [Sloss Furnaces](#), an historic 32 acre blast furnace complex which is a center for community events, civic life, the creation of metal art, and the lovely Grandmother's Garden which showcases what families living in Sloss Quarters would have grown. November focuses on [Brookside Greenway Park](#) which offers camping sites, walking and birding trails, and access to 26 miles of canoeing and kayaking adventures. December wraps up the year with a trip to the Alabama Environmental Center's [Community Recycling Center](#). Not only is the Recycling Center an easy and convenient place to take your recyclables, but also provides educational workshops, tours, and assistance with sustainability best practices. The Alabama Environmental Center is a statewide nonprofit leader in advocating for sustainable living and environmental stewardship.