



# JEFFCO H<sub>2</sub>O NEWS

ISSUE 27 - SPRING/SUMMER 2019

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## Spread the Word



While spring and summer are fun and rewarding times when working in your yard and garden, with the growing season comes all sorts of challenges. Often those challenges include pests. Weeds and ant hills suddenly appear in your lawn! Hungry mosquitoes are already on the prowl, and after all the rain we've had, there is a good possibility mildew has taken a hold of some of your plants! What's a gardener to do? Before you head to the big wall of yard chemicals at your local home and garden store, take the time to first do a little research. Find out exactly what is causing the problem and the safest way to effectively treat it without inadvertently causing harm to other plants or insects that live in your landscape. Luckily this is easy because we are fortunate to have several great resources here in Jefferson County which can provide you with specialized information and recommendations. The [Alabama Master Gardener Program](#) maintains a free helpline which connects callers with a team of master gardeners who can answer your gardening questions and make recommendations for solutions. The Alabama Extension maintains a plant pathology lab housed at the [C. Beaty Hanna Horticulture & Environmental Center](#), Birmingham Botanical Gardens. The staff can examine a plant sample to determine what disease or insect is causing it harm and make recommendations. If treatment with yard chemicals is recommended, make sure you purchase a product formulated specifically for your particular problem. Always carefully follow label directions for mixing, applying, and disposal. Be sure to only target the affected plants or troublesome pests and sweep up any overspray from paved areas.

## What's Happening

**Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Series - Birmingham Botanical Gardens** - Bring your lunch and join us for this [series](#) of FREE informational seminars.

**Native Plant Sale - April 6 - 7 - Ruffner Mountain Park** - Stop buy and choose from thousands of [native plants](#) to enhance your landscape.

**Spring Plant Sale - April 12 - 14 - Birmingham Botanical Gardens** - [Shop](#) a huge selection of plants, including natives, just in time for spring planting.

**Household Hazardous Waste Collection Events - April 20** - THREE FREE opportunities to properly dispose of your items! Bessemer: open to unincorporated Jefferson County and Bessemer residents - the flyer is [HERE](#); Fairfield & Irondale: open to all Jefferson County residents - the flyer is [HERE](#).

**Earth Day at the Gardens - April 20 - Birmingham Botanical Gardens** - Enjoy this family friendly [event](#) and activities in a beautiful garden setting.

**National Prescription Drug Take Back Day - April 27** - More than 457 tons of unwanted prescription medications were collected nationwide in the October 2018 event. Multiples locations will be hosted by local law enforcement. Find a [collection](#) event near you.

**Do Dah Day - May 18 - Rhodes Park, Birmingham** - Come out and support this fun, family oriented [event](#) benefitting animal charities.

**Rain Barrel Workshop - June 15 - Birmingham Botanical Gardens** - Build and bring home a rain barrel to collect, store, and use rainwater as needed! Preregistration is required. For more information, click [HERE](#).

## The Intrepid Gardener

In the last issue, you heard from Wayne (AKA Mr. T!) about his gardening experiences during the last growing season at his new home and a little bit about what he hopes to accomplish this year. While Wayne and his wife are at the beginning stages of getting their yard and garden to what they want them to be, Hana has been hard at work on improving her landscape for about 15 years. Over that time period, she has made many changes and additions to her yard and garden beds. As a master gardener, she has used her knowledge to put in place the foundational elements of a great landscape such as improving the soil and drainage, and also has done some experimenting with native plants and water features. Click [HERE](#) to find out how Hana made these changes.

## Rainscaping



Rainscaping is the practice of designing or altering your landscape to keep as much stormwater on your property as possible so that it has opportunities to soak into the ground close to where it falls rather than being conveyed somewhere else or running off your landscape. There are many [options](#) available that can help manage stormwater on your property, such as rain gardens, rain barrels, natural areas, bioswales, permeable pavement, mulch, and incorporating diverse plants and trees, just to name a few. The reason it is so important that these types of practices be used on as many residential properties in our cities and communities as possible is because tens of thousands of roofs, driveways, sidewalks, streets, and other impervious surfaces created by development have replaced the forests and meadows that once provided the natural systems which absorbed rainwater on site. It's important to note that development is not a bad thing; homes and other structures are essential to modern human living and working conditions! But as our population centers have grown and created more hard surfaces, the result has been a dramatic increase in the amount of stormwater runoff being generated. This stormwater runoff travels very swiftly from roofs and paved areas, and is carried by man-made ditches and storm drains into local creeks and streams. Large amounts of stormwater rushing into waterways carves out the sides of creeks and streams, causing them to widen and fill with silt from eroded soil. These changes alter the quantity and type of

aquatic life that can survive in our waterways. In addition, [stormwater runoff](#) is not treated; it carries whatever is on the ground (yard chemicals, litter, automotive fluids, oil, etc.) directly into waterways. This whole process contributes to water pollution, property damage, and degraded environmental health. Making a small change or series of small changes to your [home landscape](#) can help reduce the consequences of stormwater runoff in your community. Many of these practices are low cost and can be the first steps to increasing the beauty and enjoyment of your yard while reducing stormwater runoff.

## Danger in Disguise



They can look so pretty and grow so well when you plant them. But some non-native and exotic plants have a dark side that should make you reconsider using them in your landscape - they often are invasive plants. So when is a plant considered to be invasive and why does it matter? A plant that is both non-native and able to establish itself on many sites, grow quickly, and spread to the point of disrupting plant communities or ecosystems is considered to be invasive. Invasive plants are usually undesirable because they are difficult to control, can escape from cultivation and disrupt existing landscaping. A plant that is considered to be invasive in Alabama may not be invasive in another part of the world. That is because climate, growing season, and competing species in that particular area might not provide the plant with the advantages it would need to overtake other plants. Even some non-native plants that are common landscape plants are considered to be invasive because of their abilities to displace other plants and dominate an area: nandina, common periwinkle, Bradford pear, and monkey grass are a few examples. Michelle Reynolds, Ruffner Mountain Habitat Garden Club and native plant enthusiast, recommends avoiding invasives altogether and choosing native plants whenever possible. [Here](#) is an article by Michelle (previously published in *Alabama Gardener* magazine) about how choices that you make in your landscape can have consequences beyond your property, and which may help you to re-evaluate your

landscape as well as the plant choices you make.

**For Unincorporated Jefferson County: Call 325.5792 to report suspected water pollution - Call 582.6555 to report illegal dumping**

**For questions, to schedule a presentation in unincorporated Jefferson County, or to unsubscribe, please email [lyn.diclemente@jccal.org](mailto:lyn.diclemente@jccal.org) or call 325.8741.**