



JEFFCO H₂O NEWS

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Permaculture



Permaculture is a philosophy that encourages people to work with nature, not against it. In its purest form, permaculture encompasses how food is grown, how energy is generated, what materials and practices are used in building homes and cities, and the impact of work that people perform, all with the goal of minimizing any negative environmental effects. While you may not have the desire to go all in with embracing permaculture, there are small steps that are very attainable as well as very beneficial for most people to achieve in the landscape. These [steps](#) can make your landscape more resilient, maximize the efficiency of your gardening efforts, and reduce environmental impact. Siting the garden to make the sun, wind and water benefit your efforts and choosing appropriate plants are important components in efficiently utilizing natural resources. In addition to incorporating these readily available resources, other permaculture practices include installing rain barrels to capture and reuse rainwater to further increase water usage efficiency, composting kitchen and yard waste and using the resulting product to improve soil, replacing areas of the lawn with edible landscaping to increase biodiversity, or replacing paved driveways with permeable options to allow more rainwater to soak into the landscape. Permaculture is a broad topic, but a quick internet search for residential permaculture will provide many practical and affordable examples and [guides](#) on how to get started. Have you already tried using permaculture at home? If so, send us an email and photos about what worked and what didn't!

What's Happening ?

Birmingham Botanical Gardens Spring Plant Sale, April 15 - 18 - The Annual Spring Plant Sale has gone virtual! Visit bbgardens.org to learn how to shop the sale and purchase plants for your landscape.

Earth Day at the Gardens - April 22 - The Birmingham Botanical Gardens will host self guided activities during its normal hours of operation, 7 am - 6 pm. Free paper shredding will be offered from 10 am to 2 pm until capacity is met. All state and local health protocols will be observed. Visit bbgardens.org for more information.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event - April 24 - Three drop off locations (Bessemer, Gardendale, Irondale), open to all residents of Jefferson County. [HERE](#) is more information about this free event. All state and local health protocols will be observed.

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day - April 24 - Various Locations - Keep prescription drugs out of the wrong hands and out of the sanitary sewer system (please [don't flush](#) down the toilet). Contact your local law enforcement agency for locations and times for safe, free drop off opportunities.

Electronic Collection Events - Got some old or unwanted electronics? Bring them to one of three FREE drop off events. Open to all residents of Jefferson County. All state and local health protocols will be observed. For locations and what to bring, click [HERE](#).

Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Series - Virtual - Returning for its 10th year, this series of FREE seminars packed with helpful information for your home landscape and garden runs through September. Register online at bbgardens.org to reserve your virtual seat. The seminar flyer is [HERE](#).

Urban Green Back 2 Basics - Virtual - Alabama Cooperative Extension System offers an array of webinar topics with a new lineup for spring as well as favorites available on demand. Many are applicable to a residential landscape. Click [HERE](#) to browse through the topics and register.

Planning and Planting for All Seasons



Out of necessity, many of us have spent more time outdoors than we normally would in order to connect with family and friends. Whether that was to enjoy a meal together in the backyard or stroll and chat for a few minutes, you may have wished that your landscape was more able to accommodate a small gathering, provide some shade, or foster a sense of peace and quiet from working and parenting from home. Now is the time to start planning for a more functional outdoor space. Whether you have a big or small yard, or a big or small budget, you can start putting a plan in place. A well designed landscape not only will provide years of enjoyment for your family, it also will add to your property value. All good ideas begin with a plan, so take some time to imagine what type of functions you would like your landscape to serve over time. A successful residential landscape plan must work functionally as well as aesthetically. Implementing individual, uncoordinated improvements without an overall goal and plan sometimes don't work out well once they are completed because they ultimately fail to achieve what you intended. Even if you decide to make improvements over a period of time to stay within a budget, creating an overall plan will help you implement portions step by step to achieve your goal. This comprehensive [article](#) from the Alabama Extension offers guidance and tips on how to make your dream landscape a reality.

Pet Friendly Yards



Most pets love to run and play outdoors. Pets also enjoy digging in the dirt, rolling in vegetation, and chewing and eating all sorts of things they find in the yard. We love our pets and want to keep them healthy and safe! That's why you may want to consider [pet proofing](#) your yard for your four legged friend's romps outdoors. While you probably already have implemented ways to protect your pet from many threats such as traffic and other animals, there still could be danger lurking in your landscape. Making sure that your yard is free from plants that are toxic to dogs and cats will help protect your pet. Another important consideration is picking up and properly disposing of [pet waste](#). An average sized dog produces about 1/2 pound of waste per day. Multiply that by 365 days and your yard could easily be host to 182 pounds of dog doo in a year. The average pile of dog waste contains 2.5 billion fecal coliform bacteria as well as viruses and parasites. Dog or cat waste does not act as a fertilizer and in fact can kill grass and plants. You also probably have noticed that your pet usually chooses the same areas to do its 'doody'. That's because your pet doesn't like to walk or play in its own waste. Routinely picking up pet waste from your yard, bagging it in a dark plastic bag to heat up and kill pathogens, and disposing of it in the trash is an important part of keeping your pet and your family safe and healthy.