

Landscape Maintenance



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Description

This category includes businesses that provide landscaping and landscape maintenance/gardening services.

Pollutant Sources

The following are sources of pollutants:

- Selecting plants or landscape design
- Installing new landscaping
- Maintaining landscapes
- Using pesticides and fertilizers
- Using gas-powered equipment
- Working near waterbodies

Pollutants can include:

- Nutrients (fertilizers, yard wastes)
- Pesticides
- Heavy metals (copper, lead, and zinc)
- Hydrocarbons (fuels, oils and grease)
- Sediments

Approach

Minimize the potential for stormwater pollution and the need for resources/controls (water, pesticides, fertilizers) by creating and maintaining landscapes in a way that is compatible with the local soils, climate, and amount of rain and sun. Make stormwater



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pollution prevention BMPs a part of standard operating procedures and the employee training program. Provide employee education materials in the first language of employees, as necessary.

Source Control BMPs

The best management practices are listed by activity or area.

Landscape Design

- Specify native, low maintenance, and insectary (attract beneficial insects) plants and landscape designs.
- Design zoned, water-efficient irrigation systems using technologies such drip irrigation, soaker hoses, or microspray systems.
- Do not landscape riparian areas, except to remove non-native plants and replace them with native riparian landscaping.
- Replant with native species where possible when landscaping or building an ornamental pond. Do not assume something is native because you have seen it in your area. Contact the local nursery for information or visit the California Exotic Pest Plant Council website (www.caleppc.org).

Landscape Installation

- Protect stockpiles and landscaping materials from wind and rain by storing them under tarps or secured plastic sheeting.
- Schedule grading and excavation projects during dry weather.
- Divert runoff from exposed soils or lower its velocity by leveling and terracing.
- Use temporary check dams or ditches to divert runoff away from storm drains.
- Protect storm drains with sandbags or other sediment controls.
- Revegetation is an excellent form of erosion control for any site. Keep soils covered with vegetation or temporary cover material (mulch) to control erosion.
- Check plant roots before buying a plant. Do not buy plants with roots that are kinked or circling around the container. Do not buy plants with soft, rotten, or deformed root crowns.
- Do not pile soil around the plant any higher than the root crown.

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Yard Waste

- Allow leaf drop to become part of the mulch layer in tree, shrub, and groundcover areas.
- Keep lawn mower blades sharp and grasscycle.
- Grasscycle – leave grass clippings on the lawn when mowing. Once cut, grass clippings first dehydrate, then decompose, quickly disappearing from view. Proper mowing is required for successful grasscycling. Cut grass when the surface is dry, and keep mower blades sharp. Follow the "1/3 Rule": mow the lawn often enough so that no more than 1/3 of the length of the grass blade is cut in any one mowing. Frequent mowing will produce short clippings that will not cover up the grass surface. The lawn may have to be cut every seven days when the lawn is growing fast but only every 7 to 14 days when the lawn is growing slowly.

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- Do not leave clippings on pavement or sidewalks where they can wash off into the street, gutter, or storm drain.
- Collect lawn and garden clippings, pruning waste, and tree trimmings. Chip if necessary, and compost or take to the local municipal yard waste recycling/composting facility.
- In communities with curbside pick-up of yard waste, place clippings and pruning waste at the curb in approved bags or containers. No curbside pickup of yard waste is available for commercial properties.
- Do not blow or rake leaves or other yard waste into the street, or place yard waste in gutters or on dirt shoulders, unless it is being piled up for recycling (allowed by some municipalities). After pick-up, sweep up any leaves, litter, or residue in gutters or on street.

Fertilizing and Pruning

- Perform soil analysis seasonally to determine actual fertilization need and application rates.
- Fertilize garden areas with a mulch of leaves, bark, or composted manure and/or garden waste.
- Apply chemical fertilizer only as needed, when plants can best use it, and when the potential for it being carried away by runoff is low. Make sure the fertilizer spreader is calibrated.
- Prune plants sparingly, if at all. A healthy plant – one that is native to the area and growing under the right conditions – should not need pruning, except when it is not in the right location (where safety or liability is a concern).

Watering

- Use soil probes to determine soil moisture depth, overall moisture levels, and the need to adjust irrigation schedules.

Pest and Weed Control

- Anyone who is in the business of landscape maintenance and performs pest control as part of providing that service must have a license from the state to apply pesticides. Contact the Department of Pesticide Regulation for more information.
- Become trained in and offer customers less-toxic pest control or Integrated Pest Management (IPM).
- The label on a pesticide container is a legal document. Use a pesticide only as instructed on the label.
- Store pesticides, fertilizers, and other chemicals indoors or in a shed or storage cabinet.
- Use pesticides sparingly, according to instructions on the label. Rinse empty containers, and use rinsewater as product.
- Dispose of rinsed, empty containers in the trash. Dispose of unused pesticides as hazardous waste.
- To control weeds, use drip irrigation and mulch. Hand-pull weeds including roots or cut down to ground. Repeat cutting before they flower, grow new leaves, or go to seed. Use herbicides containing pelargonic acid or herbicidal soap as a last resort.

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Handling Gasoline

- Use only containers approved by a nationally recognized testing lab, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Keep the container tightly sealed. Containers should be fitted with a spout to allow pouring without spilling and to minimize the generation of vapors.
- Fill cautiously. Always use a funnel and/or spout to prevent spilling or splashing when fueling power mowers, blowers, and all other gas-powered equipment.
- Avoid spilling gasoline on the ground, especially near wells. If a spill occurs use kitty litter, saw dust, or an absorbent towel to soak up the spill, then dispose of it properly.
- Store carefully. Gasoline moves quickly through soil and into groundwater, therefore, store and use gasoline and fuel equipment as far away from your drinking water well as possible. Be certain to keep a closed cap on the gasoline container. Store at ground level, not on a shelf to minimize the danger of falling and spilling.
- Do not dispose of gasoline down the drain, into surface water, onto the ground, or in the trash. Contact the local municipality for directions on proper disposal of excess or old gasoline. Transport old gas in an approved gasoline container.

Working Near Waterbodies

- Do not dump lawn clippings, other yard waste, or soil along creek banks or in creeks.
- Do not store stockpiles of materials (soil, mulch) along creek banks. These piles can erode over time into a creek.
- Do not spray pesticides or fertilizers by creeks.
- Do not over water near streams. The excess water may carry pesticides, fertilizers, sediments, and anything else in its path directly into the creek.
- Do not remove native vegetation along creek banks or remove large woody debris from creek banks or creeks. Instead, contact the local municipal planning department and Department of Fish & Game for guidance.

Treatment Control BMPs

Not applicable.

More Information

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Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program, 2001. Landscaping, Gardening, and Pool Maintenance – Best Management Practices for the Construction Industry.

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