Home Tips for Healthy Streams

Car and Driveway Tips

Oil, antifreeze and contaminants from car exhaust will kill fish when washed off roads into storm drains and streams.

1. Fix oil and transmission leaks. Place a drip tray under the car. Never dispose of used oils and antifreeze into gutters or storm drains, all of which empty into streams. Recycle used oil and antifreeze.
2. Wash cars with a minimum of detergent. Where possible, wash on gravel or lawns to avoid runoff entering storm drains. Never dump leftover detergents or cleaning compounds into gutters or storm drains.
3. Sweep your walks and driveways. Hosing washes litter and pollutants into storm drains and streams.
4. Avoid paving your lot. Consider using porous asphalts, paving stones or bricks to let water seep through driveways and walks.
5. During construction projects, keep wet concrete from storm drains and streams. It is very toxic to fish and other wildlife.

If you live near a stream...

1. Keep streams shaded. Trees and bushes keep the water cool for fish and help stabilize the banks. Do not remove streamside vegetation within 15 m of the stream.
2. Keep litter and trash out of streams. Besides being unsightly, trash will collect into debris jams and block water flow. Limit in-stream cleanup activity to the summer months.
3. Keep garden waste out of streams. Branches, grass clippings and weeds rot and reduce the amount of oxygen in the water.
4. Keep pets away from streams. Animal waste is polluting. Pets entering streams can erode streambanks and cause siltation; their activity also disturbs wildlife and salmon living in streams.
5. Landscape with care. Despite good intentions, changes you make in and around streams may destroy spawning beds and fish habitat, or block fish migration. Do not build ponds, dams or bridges without guidance and approval from Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Environment.

The Solution

Everyone can take part in wise stream stewardship. Using these tips will help keep our streams healthy and beautiful now and for the future.

For more information, contact:

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
  (604) 666-6614
- B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks
  (604) 582-5200
- BC Recycling Hotline
  In the Lower Mainland: 732-9253
  Toll-free: 1-800-667-4321

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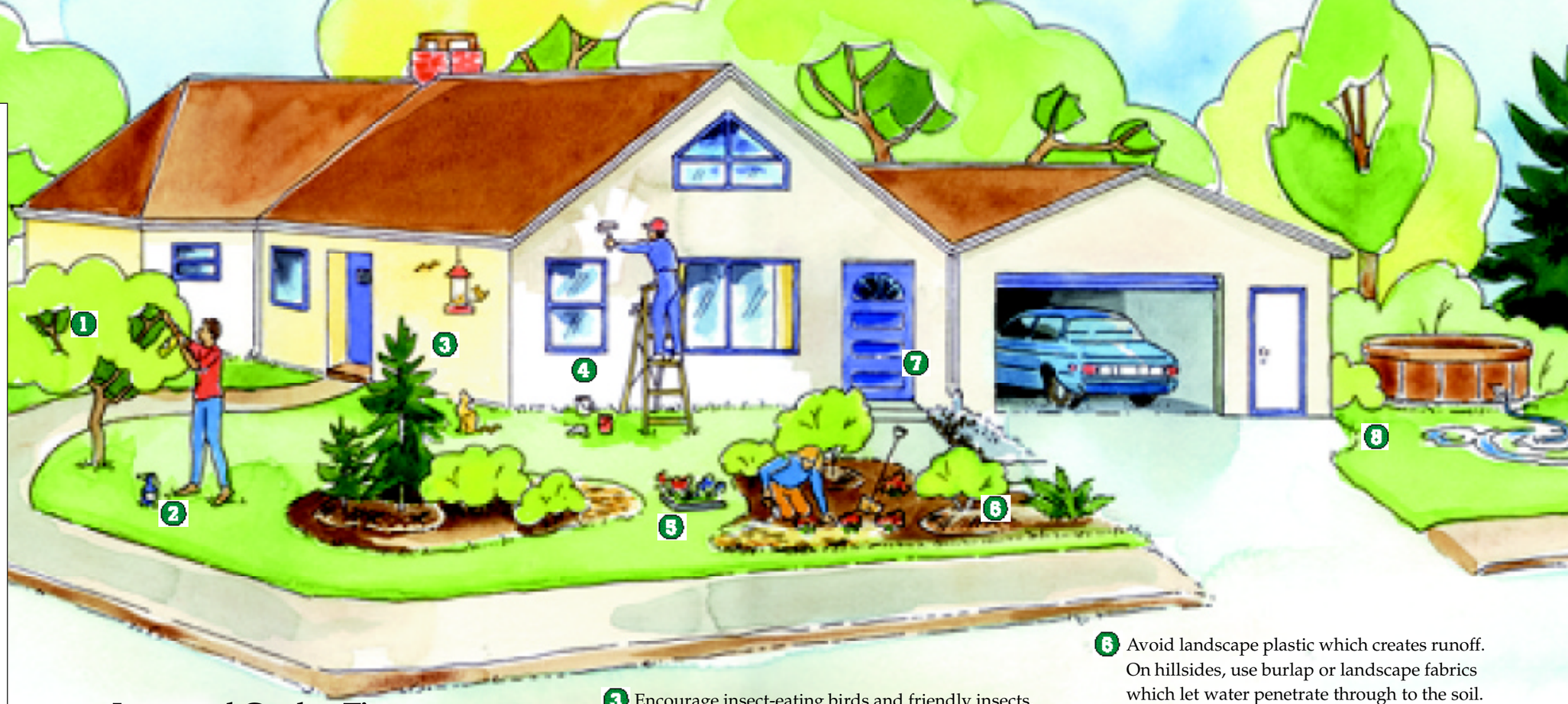

The Problem

When urban development covers the land with buildings, concrete and asphalt, less rain soaks into the soil. The water stays on the surface and runs off quickly into streams, ditches and storm drains, which also empty into streams. The result is "urban runoff."

Urban runoff can pollute streams. The runoff water collects litter, oil, gas, fertilizer, pesticides and anything else that will float or dissolve. These untreated pollutants flow directly into streams through ditches or storm drains.

Remember:

Under the *Fisheries Act*, it is unlawful to harmfully alter the habitat of a fish-bearing stream or add deleterious substances to its waters.

Lawn and Garden Tips

Weed killers and other pesticides can also kill animals, plants and beneficial insects. Fertilizer runoff causes excess weed and algae growth in streams which reduces the available oxygen for fish and other aquatic life.

1. Instead of weed killers and other pesticides, consider hand-pulling weeds and using insecticidal soap.
2. If you must use chemicals do not over apply. Use specific spot treatments rather than general broadcast herbicides. Never spray near ditches, lakes or streams. Spray on windless days and not before or during rain.
3. Encourage insect-eating birds and friendly insects. Useful insects are spiders, ladybugs and lacewings that eat pest insects. Attract birds with tree cover, food during the winter and protection from cats.
4. Dispose of unused paint and chemicals correctly. Never dump into household toilets and sinks or outside ditches, storm drains or streams. Follow guidelines for disposal or recycling from the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Waste Management Branch.
5. Use straw, leaves, or grass clippings to keep down weeds and insulate the soil. Limit use of bark mulch near streams and storm drains, because it leaches toxins.
6. Avoid landscape plastic which creates runoff. On hillsides, use burlap or landscape fabrics which let water penetrate through to the soil.
7. If possible, redirect roof downspouts away from drain tiles and street storm drains. Gravel drain systems filter and slowly release rain into the groundwater stores, which later enter streams.

Hot Tub and Pool Tips

Chemicals such as chlorine are very toxic to fish and animals.

8. When draining hot tubs or pools, direct the water slowly into the ground or sewer system. Never drain water into streets and storm drains.