



## *Yard Clippings & Your Creek Bank*

There are several reasons dumping yard clippings onto the creek bank is not a good idea. Although one pile does not seem like it could become a serious issue by itself, if everyone who lived along a creek allowed these conditions to exist, the overall result could be a serious impact. Yard clippings that are dumped onto creek banks can result in erosion, flooding, and even depleted oxygen levels. Please never dump leaves, grass clippings, or prunings onto creek banks or into the creek.

**Erosion** Yard debris inhibits the growth of healthy bank vegetation, leaving the bank vulnerable to erosion. Creek banks are held together by the roots of the vegetation growing on them, and when the roots die off, the creek bank is only as strong as the soil underneath. When this happens, rain that washes over the creek bank, and the shear stress of the creek's flow will in time cause the bank to erode away. Always try to keep your creek bank vegetated. A list of native vegetation appropriate for Marin County creek banks is available from Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program.

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**Flooding** Any prunings or branches that have been tossed onto the creek bank take an exceptionally long time to decompose. It is very likely that before they are able to decompose either rain or high flow levels will wash this material into the creek. This material could then form a blockage, which could result in flooding. Just a couple of branches may not cause an obstruction by themselves, but when combined with natural sources from the rest of the creek, a major obstruction could result at bridges and culverts.

**Oxygen Levels** It is also very likely that rain or high flow levels will wash yard clippings off the creek bank and into the creek flow. Although leaves and organic waste are biodegradable, excess nitrogen that is produced by decomposing material can reduce the levels of oxygen needed by fish and aquatic life. The more decomposing vegetation is present, the more nitrogen is introduced to the creek. This results in a lack of oxygen and can kill fish and other aquatic life.

Please compost leaves, grass clippings, and other organic waste away from the creek, or have them hauled away by your local yard waste pick up service.

***Yard Waste Pickup Services***

- Bay Cities Refuse Service ..... (415) 332-3646
- Mill Valley Refuse Service ..... (415) 457-9760
- Marin Sanitary Service ..... (415) 456-2601
- San Anselmo
- Refuse and Recycling ..... (415) 453-4610
- Novato Disposal Service ..... (415) 897-4177

***Composting Information***

- Marin Master Gardeners ..... (415) 499-4204
- Marin County Stormwater
- Pollution Prevention Program ... (415) 499-6528



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