HOME AND GARDEN COLUMN

WELLS

The rain and flooding has highlighted many issues relating to soil saturation and drainage. Water is a solvent and moves anything that dissolves with it including nutrients, soil sediment, litter and chemicals.

I heard it said recently that we are our own worst enemy. Unknowingly, we can be causing harm to the environment and endangering our drinking water and surface water ponds. What you don’t know can hurt you, so find out how you can avoid causing problems and plan solutions to avoid being a polluter.

Do you have a septic tank on your property? Do you have a curb and gutter system on your road? Are you concerned about fertilizer and pesticides getting into a pond near your home? Do you have a drinking water well?

The UF/IFAS Osceola County Extension office has information to help you identify possible home pollution sources and prevent future problems.

Florida Home•A•Syst is a booklet designed to help homeowners and renters know about environmental problems in and around the home which could contaminate drinking water or nearby lakes. Readers learn how to take action to reduce the risks and safeguard the health of family members and the environment.

Every home, whether in the city or country, rented or owned, has potential pollution sources. Fertilizers, pesticides, pet waste, leaky underground fuel tanks, lead pipes and solder can contaminate drinking wells.

New homes may have problems with indoor air quality while old homes may have problems with lead-based paints. Radon gas comes from the ground and is a possible cause of lung cancer. All homes should be checked for radon.

Cabinets, carpet, cleaning products, paints and plastics may produce volatile organic compounds or VOCs which are hazardous to your health. Reduce your risks by reading product labels and selecting those with low VOCs (volatile organic compounds).

When selecting carpet, choose a low pile type which is certified by CRI to be low VOC emitting carpet. Have the dealer unroll and air out the carpet before it is installed. Install the carpet when you can provide adequate ventilation during installation.

Septic systems are expected to last for 15 to 40 years depending on the design. Older systems are less likely to meet current safety or design standards. You may have problems with proper function during heavy rainfall when soils are saturated. If you have more people living in your house than the system was designed for, you will also have problems.

Wells over 30 years old are subject to corrosion. Test your well every year to be sure the water is safe to drink. Contact the Osceola County Environmental Health on Boggy Creek Road for details on water testing at 407-343-2070. They test for nitrate, bacteria and lead. If you are concerned about other contaminants, they have a list of local testing labs.

Fertilizing before a rain storm has the potential of polluting wells, ponds and streams. Use low rates of fertilizers with slow release materials and avoid pesticides if possible.

Don’t burn household trash. Instead, dispose of trash at approved landfills such as in St. Cloud and at Southport in Kissimmee. Recycle glass, office paper, newspaper, aluminum, steel cans, and plastic soda and milk bottles. Osceola County has many neighborhood recycling centers. Call them at 407-397-7653 for a location near you.
Store fuel for lawn care equipment away from the house in a well ventilated shed with a concrete floor. Always store fuel in a UL approved container, never in a beverage bottle or open container.

You are the solution to local pollution. Reduce your health risks, protect our drinking water and keep our lakes clean. Call the UF/IFAS Osceola County Extension Service at 321-697-3000 to request a Florida Home*A*Syst manual. Copies are also available in Spanish. Chapters are also available online at http://homeasyst.ifas.ufl.edu/.

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