

## Do you know what a swale is? How about a berm?

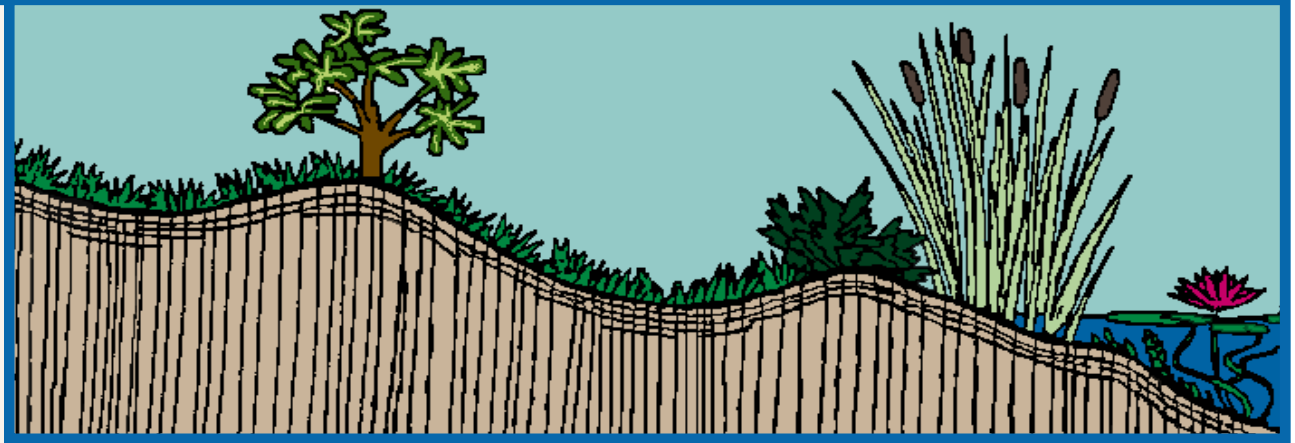
When land is converted from its natural state to other uses, such as roads, homes, and shopping centers, many impervious or paved surfaces are created.

Rainfall becomes stormwater when it can no longer soak into the ground and “runs off” the impervious surfaces.

The volume, speed and pollutants of stormwater runoff increase with land development.

Stormwater management practices are used to retain or detain runoff to filter out the pollutants.

These practices also minimize flooding, protect property and reduce pollution of water bodies.



**SWALES** are one of the most commonly used stormwater practices.

For many years, swales have been used to direct runoff from rural highways and residential streets.

Today, swales not only direct stormwater but also help filter runoff and reduce pollutants.

A swale slows down the rapid flow of stormwater runoff by ponding water between its sloping sides, often called berms.

The ponding not only slows the rate of flow but allows pollutants to settle out of the water.

When the swale becomes full, the cleaner surface water will spill over the berm and slowly run into a local water body.

Eventually, the remaining ponded water will either evaporate or infiltrate into the soil.

## What YOU Can DO...

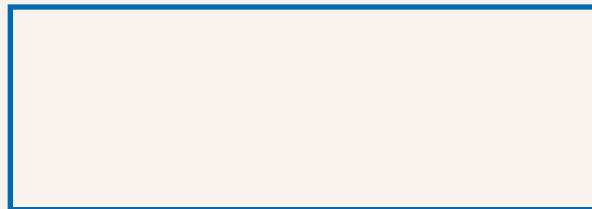
- ◆ Let water pond. Runoff should temporarily pond in the swale for 24 to 26 hours.
- ◆ Mow the swale but keep it at a good grass growth.
- ◆ Remove and compost leaves and grass clippings from swales.
- ◆ Minimize use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.
- ◆ Understand that sometimes swales must be dug out in order to reestablish their shape — this allows swales to continue doing their job, collecting soil so it does not reach water bodies.
- ◆ Do not pile garbage, trash, leaves, limbs or garden debris in swales — this adds pollutants which can wash into downstream waters.
- ◆ Do not pave the swale — this reduces the filtration and infiltration of runoff.
- ◆ Do not park vehicles in the swale — this compacts the soil so less runoff soaks in.

**BE PART OF THE  
SOLUTION,  
Contact the following  
for more information!**

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
Nonpoint Source Management  
2600 Blair Stone Road  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2400  
Phone: (850) 245-7508

MIDWEST RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
FLORIDA DIVISION  
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS  
1470 Treeland Blvd., SE  
Palm Bay, FL 32909  
Phone: (321) 723-4547

For local information, contact:



Swale & Berm Drawing from  
Brevard County Surface Water  
Improvement

# Save the SWALES



**Protect Florida's  
Water**