



# Wet Backyards

Residents frequently contact Franklin Soil and Water or their local municipality when rainfall results in ponding water, drainage problems, or inaccessible portions of property. Many times, corrective action can help address safety concerns, structural damage, or inappropriately maintained drainage infrastructure resulting from one or more of the following:

- Gutter/Downspout Failure
- Climate Change
- Soil and Landscape Characteristics
- Surface and Subsurface Drainage



## Gutters and Downspouts

Just a half inch of rain falling on a 1,000-square-foot roof will yield 300 gallons of water. Properly installed gutters should keep water away from your foundation, as wetness or erosion near walls and driplines can be damaging and cause shifting, settling, cracks, and leaks. Possible causes include clogged or undersized gutters, or downspouts discharging too close to your foundation.

**SOLUTION:** Clean downspouts at least once a year, monitor for overflow or pooling water, and ensure the discharge point (including sump pump) is at least 3-4' away from your foundation. Your runoff should not be a nuisance to your neighbors, or empty onto a sidewalk where ice forms in winter.

## Climate Change

Many long-time residents become concerned when observing standing water in areas where it had not pooled in the past. The last decade has been our wettest on record, and Ohio's springs continue to be warmer and wetter than average, with winters warming twice as fast as summers. With less ice and snowpack to retain water longer, runoff is immediate. Ohio still suffers drought, however- in 2019, 80 percent of Ohio was severely dry with the hottest September on record.

**SOLUTION:** Residents may conserve water for later summers with a rain barrel or cistern and should have underground drainage systems in place prior to wet seasons. Studies show that female mosquitoes prefer to lay eggs in water that collects or is stored in manmade containers. Breeding occurs within 10-14 days in stagnant water, including clogged gutters and open rain barrels. Practice regular cleaning, and using mosquito dunks.

## Soil and Landscape Characteristics

Some areas in Franklin County have clay-heavy poorly draining soils, and about 85% of the land in Ohio is affected by a seasonally high water table. Newer subdivision lots (especially those outside Interstate 270) generally do not have quality topsoil left after grading and construction. Instead, homeowners find themselves with heavy, hard subsoil as a poor foundation for grass establishment and other plantings that help slow and filter runoff. Your landscape modifications and those of your neighbors that include additions, mature shrubs, or soil movement tend to change drainage patterns, too often directing water to foundation walls. Finally, those living near streams or ravines may clear plants and trees for an unobstructed view or easy access, but this threatens property and water quality with erosion, and intensifies runoff. Less trees result in less water removed from soil through the process of evaporation.

**SOLUTION:** Aeration, soil amendment, grass-cycling, and mulching fall leaves on lawns help build up oxygen-rich organic matter over time that retains more water and supports deep plant roots. Encouraging water-tolerant plants or planting a rain garden can sometimes be a resolution for periodic wet spots that do not support turfgrass. Always ensure a positive grade away from your house's foundation, and practice stream stewardship where appropriate.



Certain native plant species can tolerate seasonally wet areas better than turfgrass and help prevent erosion.



If flooding threatens structures on your property, a french drain system may be worth the investment.

## Ohio Drainage Law

Water should enter and leave your property where it did prior to any construction activities. Changing the flow of water in a manner that causes damage to an upstream or downstream neighbor may result in legal liabilities.

### What Can Franklin Soil and Water Do?

- Soils information and general drainage review
- Provide contractor list
- Provide rain garden plant list and technical guidance
- Advise of eligibility for rebate or grant programs



**Franklin Soil and Water  
Conservation District**

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