

# What is a Swale?

Chances are if you've lived in Miami-Dade County long enough, you've heard at least one person refer to a "swale." A swale is the grassy area of land that stretches from the edge of the sidewalk in front of homes (or the property line if there is no sidewalk) to the edge of the street.

Swales are a commonly used stormwater management tool. They slow down the flow of stormwater and allow runoff to pond temporarily. In doing so, this helps filter pollutants from stormwater as it percolates into the ground, and it helps protect lives and property by minimizing flooding.

Swales perform an important stormwater management function, but they differ from berms/barriers and ditches in that a swale slopes gently away from property and swales tend to be wider than they are deep.



*A properly maintained swale, with a curb. Note the car is parked on the street, not the swale.*



*A poorly maintained swale. Note the entire swale area is paved and a car is parked on it.*

# Save Our Swales

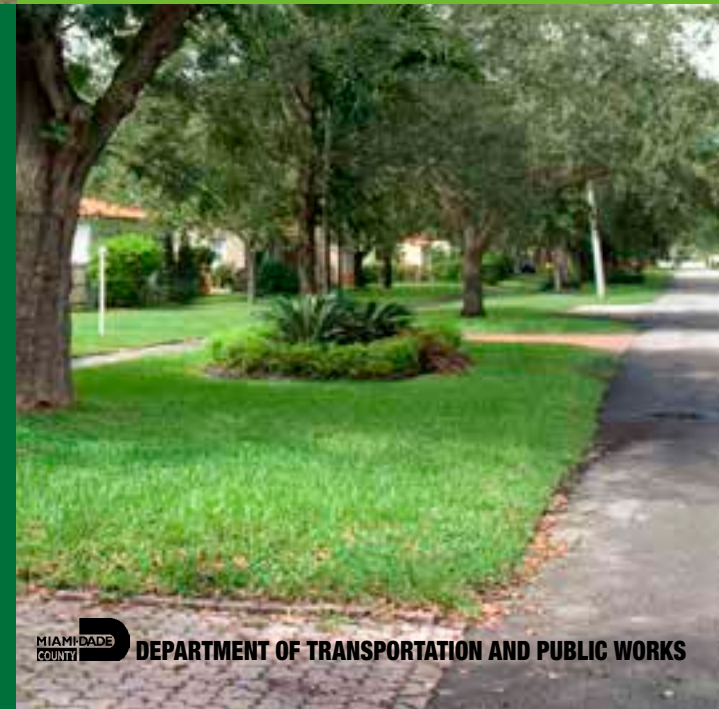
Learn why a well-kept swale is more important than you may realize



*A properly maintained swale.*

## Save Our Swales

For more information on swales and stormwater management, call (305) 375-4772 or visit <http://www.miamidade.gov/publicworks>.



# Why Should I Help Save Our Swales?

Although swales are public property—they are typically owned by the County or perhaps the municipality you live in—by law, property owners are supposed to maintain the swales in front of their properties.

But you should help Save Our Swales not only because it's the law, but because:

- A well-kept swale looks good and helps maintain property values.
- A swale that does its job properly protects your home and your neighbors' homes by helping to minimize flooding when it rains.
- Swales also help protect the environment—and our drinking water supply—by acting as filters to remove or reduce pollutants that get washed up by stormwater.



**A properly maintained swale. Note that only the driveway approach is paved.**

## Examples of Poorly Maintained Swales



**Note the paved areas and evidence of cars parking on the swale.**



**Note evidence of cars parking on the swale and the compacted soil.**



**Note evidence of cars parking on the swale and the compacted soil.**

# How Can I Help Save Our Swales?

Properly maintaining your swale area is easy and will help you to reduce street flooding in your neighborhood:

- Mow the swale area regularly to keep grass healthy and under control.
- Use as little fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides as possible on both your lawn and the swale area.
- Aerate the soil in the swale area from time to time to improve the rate of stormwater percolating into the ground.
- Don't let trash, tree limbs or garden waste accumulate in your swale: call 3-1-1 for a bulky waste pick-up if needed to remove these materials.
- Report any illegal dumping on your swale: call 9-1-1 if you see the illegal dumpers in the act, otherwise call 3-1-1 to report it.
- Do not pave your swale area unless it is for a permitted driveway approach.
- Do not park cars in the swale area; this compacts the soil and makes it more difficult for stormwater to soak in.
- Do not be alarmed if water ponds temporarily (24 to 48 hours) in your swale area; but if water ponds for longer (72 hours or more) call 3-1-1 to report it.

Para obtener una copia de este folleto en español, visite <http://www.miamidade.gov/publicworks/publications.asp>.

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