

Clean Water Landscaping Practices

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Every lawn is connected to a lake, stream, or wetland. How we manage our lawns adds up to a big impact on the watershed, for better or worse. Unfortunately lawns can be a source of excess nutrients and sediment that harm water resources. But a good looking lawn that's good for the watershed is possible.

WATERING & MOWING

- Set the mower blade at a minimum of 3", mow 1/3 of the blade at a time to avoid stressing the grass.
- Keep the mower blades sharp.
- Water according to the life cycle of grass. In spring and fall, water deeper and infrequently (6-8"/week). In summer, water shallow and more frequently (2-3"/week). Grass typically needs just 1"/week to stay green.
- Let grass go dormant in late summer.
- Water in the early morning or evening to reduce water loss from evaporation.
- Always sweep or blow grass clippings off hard surfaces and back onto lawns. Plant and cover up bare soil.



Buffers keep animal waste away from water

Photo courtesy of www.swfwmd.state.fl.us

Always sweep spilled fertilizer back onto turf

FERTILIZER & AERATION

- Leave grass clippings on the lawn as a natural and free fertilizer. If using store bought, fertilize in the fall, as this is the most effective time and most needed according to the seasons. Obtain a soil test from the U of M to be accurate for your soil and grass' needs. Follow package directions.
- When spreading fertilizer near paved surfaces, plan your route to ensure fertilizer is not being applied to the pavement.
- Sweep or blow spilled fertilizer back onto the lawn.
- Keep fertilizer applications at least 15 feet away from the edges of wetlands, lakes, and streams.
- Store fertilizer in well marked containers in closed areas to avoid spills.
- Use core aeration in the fall to loosen soil, allow water into the soil, and strengthen the root mass of the lawn.

PESTICIDE AND HERBICIDES

- Always follow label directions exactly - the label is the law.
- Plan applications for warm, sunny days with at least 24 hours before the next rainfall.
- Try a combination of spot-treating and over-seeding to control weeds and reduce reliance on chemicals.
- Use quality or standing weeding tools to efficiently weed by hand. Focus on early-June and mid-July to address cool season and warm season weed types.
- Be flexible with a few dandelions and scattered weeds.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

- Identify the desired look and use for different spaces on your lawn. If a mower and visual appeal is the only use, consider replacing it with a native planting, alternative turf, raingarden, or shoreline restoration. Plant fescues or sedges in low traffic areas with the help of watersheds and landscapers.
- Consult with a watershed organization, landscaping contractor, or BlueThumb.org for alternatives to turf grass in problem areas such as steep, shady, or wet locations. VLAWMO and other watersheds have cost-share programs to help residents and businesses in the process.
- Plant and cover up bare soil, or use rock to slow down and disperse high velocity runoff areas.
- Leave a buffer of unmowed vegetation along the edge of streams and wetlands. This vegetation serves to deter geese, who gravitate to open lawns as a means to spot potential predators. This creates high concentrations of waste which are problematic for water.



PLANTS: NATIVE AND PERENNIAL VEGETATION

The benefits of native plants and grasses:

- Adapted to local growing conditions.
- Certain types grow well in poor or frequently wet soil.
- Deep roots help prevent erosion.
- Prairie species are drought tolerant.
- Once established, they require no watering, mowing, fertilizing, or pesticides.
- Stand up in winter under the weight of snow and help keep snow off the roadways.
- Provide habitat for pollinators and birds.



Thank you for supporting responsible yard care for the health of the watershed!

Visit VLAWMO.org/ residents for more information, tips, and resources.

