

Clean Water Landscaping Practices

Why does it matter?

Stormwater can carry pollution and chemicals directly into ditches and storm drains which connect to lakes, streams, and wetlands. It is up to you to protect clean water.

Lawn Care and Mowing

- Set the mower blade at a minimum of 3". Preferably 4"-6".
- Keep mower blades sharp.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn as a free fertilizer.
- ALWAYS sweep or blow grass clippings off hard surfaces and back onto lawns.
- Leave a buffer of unmowed vegetation along the edge of all streams and wetlands. This provides a filter to prevent pollutants such as fertilizer, pesticides, and animal waste from running off into the water. This vegetation also serves to deter geese, who gravitate to open lawns as a means to spot potential predators.



Buffers keep animal waste away from water

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

Always sweep spilled fertilizer back onto turf

Fertilizer Application

- Use Phosphorus-free fertilizers, or the best option would be to leave grass clippings as a natural and FREE fertilizer.
- When spreading fertilizer near paved surfaces, adjust your route to ensure fertilizer is not being applied to the pavement.
- Sweep or blow grass clippings or spilled fertilizer back onto lawns to prevent it from entering storm drains, ditches and then lakes and rivers.
- Keep fertilizer applications at least 20-15 feet away from the edges of wetlands, lakes, and streams.
- Store fertilizer in well marked containers in closed areas to avoid spills.

Pesticide Application

- Always choose the least toxic chemicals.
- Always follow label directions exactly. THE LABEL IS THE LAW.
- Consider implementing municipal wide Integrated Pest Management (IPM) that does not rely heavily on pesticides.
- Consider spot treating for small problems.
- Wash out spreaders on the lawn, not on paved surfaces.
- Pinpoint the needs of your soil with a soil test from the University of Minnesota Soil Testing Laboratory:
www.soiltest.cfans.umn.edu (612) 625-3101

Landscape Design

- Identify the desired look for a lawn in various locations and consider its uses (play area, athletics, safety). If it isn't used at all, consider replacing it with alternative landscaping.
- Use only turf grasses or ground cover that are Minnesota hardy.
- Plant alternatives to turf grass in problem areas, such as steep, shady or wet locations.
- Consider specialized areas, such as butterfly and pollinator gardens. They add beauty, color and habitat.



Plants: Consider going native

Benefits of native plants and grasses:

- Adapted to local growing conditions
- Can grow in poor subsoil in post construction areas
- Deep roots help prevent erosion
- Prairie species are drought tolerant
- After established, require no watering, mowing, fertilizing, or pesticides
- Stand up in winter under the weight of snow and help keep snow off the roadways = less snowdrifts
- Provide habitat for pollinators and birds
- Areas with native plants and wildflowers should not be mowed more than once per year.



Thank you for protecting our water!