

How Green is Your Lawn?

Are you in the habit of applying fertilizer or paying someone to fertilize your lawn every spring?

Did you know that when fertilizer is applied improperly it may pollute the Clinton River, its tributaries and Lake St. Clair? Though we all want to have green and luscious lawns this spring and summer, we also need to be aware of the potential hazards our lawn care practices may cause.

When too much fertilizer is applied it washes off easily and becomes very harmful to the environment. This is especially true when a rain storm comes. Rain can wash fertilizer straight into the storm drain. Most storm drains empty into our lakes, rivers and streams.

Some tips to keep in mind

- Mow at least 3" high.
- Return clippings to recycle nutrients and sweep or blow clippings from walks and driveways onto the lawn.
- Taller grass crowds out weeds and promotes deeper roots, deeper roots help the lawn survive droughts
- Fall is the best time to fertilize your lawn.
- Be patient in the spring - wait until May to fertilize. Don't fertilize if the ground is frozen or saturated with water.
- Don't guess, soil test for proper fertilizer recommendations.
- Choose lawn fertilizers with low or no phosphorus (the middle number) and follow the directions. For a list of watershed friendly fertilizers visit: <http://www.crowc.org/stormwater-protection/>
- Maintain a NO APPLICATION zone near lakes, rivers, streams and storm drains.
- Never discharge clippings near lakes, rivers, streams or drains.
- Sweep fertilizer granules from walks and driveways onto the lawn.
- Don't soak your lawn and avoid night watering. Watering should not produce puddles; lighter, more frequent watering is best.
- Brown lawns are OK; dormancy is a natural response to drought, however, some water may be necessary during an extended drought of more than a month.

For home lawn care tips visit: <http://turf.msu.edu/home-lawn-articles> or <http://www.healthylandscapes.com/>

For a list of lawn professionals who participate in the **Healthy Lawn Care Program for Watershed Protection** visit http://www.landscape.org/healthylawncare_pro.html

For more information on the Clinton River, its watershed and Lake St. Clair visit www.crowc.org.