



Autumn Lawn and Garden Care in the Oneida Lake Watershed

Tips for maintaining an attractive yard while protecting local lakes and streams

Simple actions taken by homeowners can help to improve water quality in local waterbodies. The following recommendations for your lawn and garden will reduce sediment, nutrients, and other pollution from entering nearby lakes and streams. This will also improve fish and wildlife habitat, boating, swimming, and other forms of recreation.

Test your soil before applying fertilizer. Excess phosphorus fertilizer can end up in lakes and streams where it promotes algae and plant growth. Purchase no-phosphorus fertilizer, apply it only when needed, and carefully follow the application rates found on the bag.

Maintain the correct soil pH. This will improve the efficiency of nutrient absorption while saving you time and money. Use lime to adjust the pH to between 6.5 and 7.2.

Never apply fertilizer before a rainstorm. Heavy rainfall can cause fertilizer to flow into nearby lakes and streams. Apply a slow-release fertilizer in the fall and allowing time for gradual soil infiltration.

Leave the clippings on the lawn after mowing. Grass clippings return organic matter, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other nutrients to your lawn and help to aerate the soil.

Conserve water. Water plants in the early morning or late afternoon to minimize evaporation, and sweep your sidewalks and driveways rather than using a hose. Divert roof water to vegetated areas and wash your car on grass to promoting soil infiltration.

Cover piles of soil, sand, and mulch to prevent erosion. Wind and rain can transport this material to lakes and streams where it reduces fish habitat and recreational opportunities, while promoting weed and algae growth.

Create a compost pile. Place the compost at the base of vegetable and flower plants to recycle nutrients and organic matter, minimize soil erosion, and reduce the need for commercial fertilizer.

Plant a vegetative buffer strip along lake and stream shorelines. This will help to reduce pollution loading.

Limit your use of pesticides in order to protect humans, family pets, and wildlife. Carefully follow the recommended timing, frequency, and application rates on the container.

Carefully store and dispose of all yard and household waste and automotive chemicals. Always keep gardening products, pet waste, pesticides, oil, and gasoline away from lakes and streams.

This fact sheet was created by the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board with funding provided by the Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance through the Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District. Additional information about the Oneida Lake watershed is available at www.oneidalakewatershed.org or by calling 315-422-8276. (August 2008)