



# Lawn and Garden Care

## *Ten easy tips for maintaining an attractive yard and garden while protecting water resources*

**Test your soil before applying fertilizer.** Excess fertilizer can end up in lakes and streams where it promotes algae and plant growth. Purchase low- or no-phosphorus fertilizer and 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 lakes and streams. Apply a slow-release fertilizer in the early spring and allowing time for gradual soil infiltration.

**Mow at regular intervals.** This will maintain a healthy lawn while minimizing soil erosion, nutrient loss, and excess strain on local storm sewers.

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

**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 aquatic habitat and promotes weed and algae growth.

**Create a compost pile.** Place compost near garden plants to recycle nutrients and organic matter, minimize soil erosion, and reduce the need for commercial fertilizer.

**Limit your use of pesticides** to protect humans, pets, and water resources. Carefully follow the recommended timing, frequency, and application rates on the container.

**Carefully dispose of yard and household waste and automotive chemicals.** Keep gardening products, pet waste, pesticides, oil, and gasoline out of the storm drains.

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