



# Green Grass, Blue Water:

## Watershed Friendly Lawn Care


Adapted from *Smart Steps for Clean Water* and the P-Project



Sharon Anderson, Watershed Steward  
Cayuga Lake Watershed Network




# Lawns – 5<sup>th</sup> largest crop



## IPM

1. Test soil – nutrients and pH
2. Fertilize based on results
3. Choose the right grasses
4. Mow high
5. Water properly
6. Least toxic methods



## Benefits of Healthy Lawns

- Stabilize soil and reduce erosion
- Slows runoff
- Filters pollutants in runoff
- Play and beauty

What can you do...?



## 20-30 million acres



- More than ½ are over fertilized
- Most privately owned
- Acre for acre 10 X more chemicals than farmers

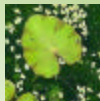


## Sources of Pollution



## Cayuga Lake South Basin “Impaired” Due to Phosphorus and Sediment

- Limiting nutrient
- Binds to soil and plants then sinks
- Re-suspends



## 10-5-12

Fertilizer by Weight:

- 10% Nitrogen – green, dense growth
- 5% Phosphorus – seed germination
- 12% Potassium – resistance to stress





**FERTILIZER**  
21-3-20  
N P K  
50 lbs.

Nitrogen: key nutrient in plant growth. 21% N in a 50 lb. bag = 10.5 lbs. N

Phosphorus: important for establishment. 3% P in a 50 lb. bag = 1.5 lbs. P

Potassium: will increase stress tolerance. 20% K in a 50 lb. bag = 10 lbs. K

P & K needed only as soil test indicates

## Fertilize Responsibly

- Refer to soil test
- Know size of area
- Proper setting
- Apply when no rain
- Use a drop spreader
- Sweep up!

## Use 0-Phosphorus Fertilizer

- NY soils have adequate P
- Zero P fertilizer:
  - Watershed Network and Cayuga Co. Soil & Water Conservation District

## Once early Sept. OR half in late May, half in early Sept.

Focus on fall fertilizing!

60% of all top growth is in the first 6 weeks

Root growth active in cooler weather

Summer stress

Fall storage

Dormant

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JULY AUG SEPT OCT NOV DEC

## Mow Right

- 3" or higher
- Sharp Blade
- Mulching Mower
- Leave Clippings
- 1/3 Rule

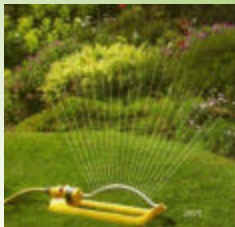


Desired Lawn Ht.	Mow@	Avg. Days b/t mowing
1.0"	1.5"	1-3
2.0"	3.0"	5-7
3.0"	4.5"	10-14



## Grass Clippings

- Leave on lawn
- Compost
  - Away from ditches, stormdrains & waterways
- Sweep clippings away from impervious surfaces



- Naturally dormant when hot, dry
  - Rain gauge
  - Early morning
  - Too much harmful
- \*More for new lawn

**1 Inch or Less/Week\***



- Bare spots immediately
- New lawns in fall



## Bargain Grasses Not a Bargain

- May have pasture grasses and weeds

### Select

- Sun or shade mix
- Improved color and resistance
- Perennial groundcover alternatives



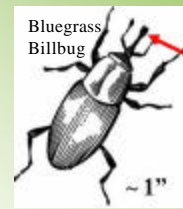
ID Pest

Tolerate

Treat with least toxic method



Images Courtesy: Univ.



## LAWN CARE SERVICES

### Other Smart Steps

- Proper Pet Waste Disposal
- Septic Systems
- Cleaners
  - 1973 NYS Law excluded dishwasher and car wash detergents



## Doing it Right!

