

Let us guess

- You want your lawn to look green and healthy just like your neighbor's.
- You don't want to spend a lot of time or money.
- You don't know that your current lawn care practices are affecting the quality of water in your area.

Did You Know?

- You are a **Macatawa watershed resident** if you live in the cities of Holland or Zeeland or in any of these townships: Park, Holland, Zeeland and Fillmore. Parts of Blendon, Port Sheldon, Georgetown, Olive, Overisel and Laketown townships are also in the watershed.
- **The Macatawa watershed is approximately 175 square miles of land** over which water travels to get to its final destination (Lake Macatawa and Lake Michigan).
- Lake Macatawa is one of the **most nutrient-rich lakes in Michigan**; this is not a good thing.

Time-Saving Tips

- Use landscaping to create a smaller lawn area. Your yard will look more lush and manicured, and water runoff from your lawn will be minimized.
- If you live on a lake, let natural grass grow by the water's edge to prevent runoff of fertilizer and other contaminants into the lake.

Phosphorus is a nutrient that makes plants grow quickly, which is why it is in fertilizer. But once it gets into our lakes and streams, it can cause growth of algae and aquatic weeds, making it harder to swim, boat and fish. Every year, watershed residents contribute thousands more pounds of phosphorus into Lake Macatawa.

The Problem with Phosphorus

Lawn Care Lingo

Do you know what the numbers and letters mean? You should.

Number 1: Nitrogen (N) – Top Growth

Nitrogen helps the grass to grow green and lush. Make sure to apply in the right amount (no more than 1 pound per 1,000 square feet). In shady areas, reduce recommended nitrogen by 25 percent. To get the most out of your money and your fertilizer, purchase mixtures with slow-release nitrogen for a steady, controlled feeding.



Number 2: Phosphorus (P) – Root Growth

Phosphorus stimulates root and seedling development. The majority of soil in the watershed is already phosphorus rich, so you don't want to apply more than is needed, if any. An established lawn shouldn't require additional phosphorus.

Number 3: Potassium (K) – Protection

Potassium helps to increase the lawn's tolerance for disease and drought. A soil test will help to determine the amount you need.

Macatawa Watershed Project

Established in 1996, the goal of the Macatawa Watershed Project is to improve water quality by reducing the phosphorus and sediment entering the waterways of Lake Macatawa, the Macatawa River and surrounding tributaries by 76 percent through the education and implementation of watershed-friendly land management practices.

Lawn Care Seal of Approval Program



Businesses that apply for the program and complete the criteria receive a special seal that they can display at their places of business and on their company materials. This designation identifies companies that are knowledgeable about and use watershed-friendly practices.



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Lawn Care you can live with



Three simple steps to improve our water


1 Fertilize Fairly

Test your soil. Contact your local conservation district or MSU Extension office for soil testing information.

Choose wisely. If you need to purchase fertilizer, look for mixtures with no phosphorus. Ottawa and Allegan counties have both passed ordinances that limit the use of phosphorus fertilizer. Also, choose bags with slow-release nitrogen for established lawns, which releases nutrients slowly, reducing the number of times you have to fertilize.



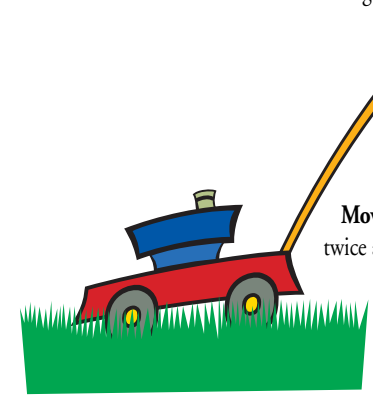
Follow directions. Too much fertilizer is not a good thing. Runoff from bare soil or paved surfaces such as sidewalks or driveways can be a major source of pollution to our lakes and rivers. Do not fertilize until three weeks after green-up in the spring. If you fertilize only once each year, late summer or fall is the best time.

Truth:  Without water, your grass grows more slowly, reducing the frequency of mowing.

2 Mow Masterfully

Mastering proper mowing techniques will encourage your lawn to make its own food, control lawn pests like crabgrass and insects, and reduce the number of times you have to mow.

Keep your grass at least three inches high to promote healthier roots and a healthier lawn overall. Cutting the grass too short will invite weeds to invade, while taller grass gets more sun and is better able to make its own food (needing less fertilizer).

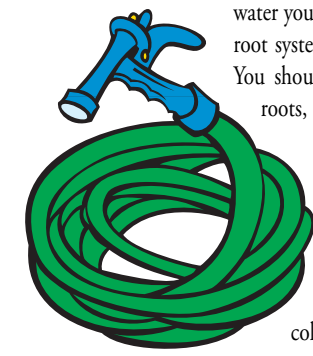


Mowing frequency rule of thumb: Mow twice a week in the spring, every two weeks in the summer and once a week in the fall. And make sure to leave your grass clippings on the lawn.

3 Watch Watering

When you water your lawn properly, it can tolerate more pest damage without the use of pesticides. Watering too much wastes clean drinking water and increases the possibility of polluting our surface water and groundwater.


If you have mastered mowing, you may not need to water your lawn at all because it should have a healthy root system that reaches deep into the soil for water. You should water your lawn deeply to moisten the roots, but infrequently.



Water watch: Lawns typically need one inch of water per week from rain or manual sprinkling. To measure how much water you are putting on your lawn, use an empty tuna can to collect the water. When the can is full, stop watering.

- Watering in the early morning or evening is best to avoid rapid evaporation from sunlight.
- Never apply more than a half-inch of water to your lawn after applying fertilizer.

Truth:  Grass clippings are the best food for your lawn. If you leave your grass clippings, you may not need to fertilize at all.

Truth:  Tall grass tolerates hot and dry conditions better and contains fewer weeds because it shades them out.