



CRWC

CLINTON RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL



FALL LAWN CARE & COMPOSTING FOR WATER QUALITY

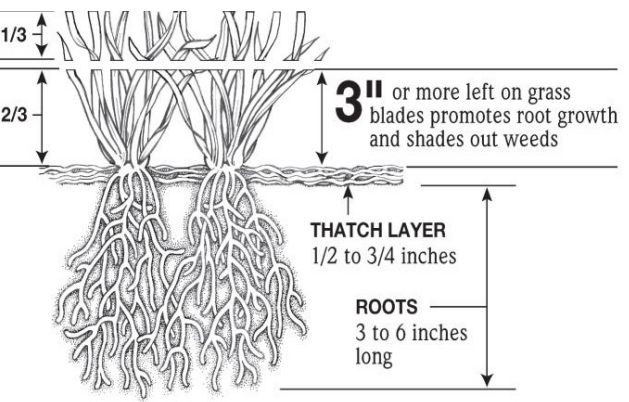


Using healthy lawn care practices is one step towards cleaner rivers and lakes — even if you don't have waterfront property.

Making sure you are watering responsibly and disposing of your yard waste correctly can do a lot to help keep our water clean.

A lot of sediment and algae problems we see in our waterways can be relieved by keeping lawn clippings out of street catch basins. Instead, sweep them back on your lawn. Clippings are mostly water and break down quickly to return valuable nutrients to the soil.

Local municipalities are doing their part by collecting yard waste or accepting it at drop-off locations. **Do your part by preventing the problems at the source!**



STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL HEALTHY LAWN:

- Mulch Your Grass Clippings.** Let short clippings fall back on to your lawn. The clippings are a good source of nitrogen so you can reduce your fertilizer use.
- Cut High.** Leave at least 3 inches on the grass blade after cutting. Tall grass promotes root growth and shades out unwanted weeds.
- Soil Organic Matter should be at least 5%.** Healthy soil consists of at least 5% organic matter. Organic matter provides a natural reservoir of nutrients and holds water. To assess your soil, test for basic nutrients and organic matter every one or two years.
- Aerate Compacted Soil.** In early spring use a core aerator to remove finger-like plugs of grass and soil or hire a landscape service. Aeration improves drainage and allows water and oxygen to reach the grass roots.
- Rake Compost into the Lawn.** Rake 1/2 inch of compost into an established lawn. Leave half of the grass blade exposed to sunlight and air. Compost adds microorganisms, nutrients, and organic matter, helping build soil fertility.
- Water Lawn to Minimize Stress.** To have a green lawn in Michigan your lawn only needs 0.5 to 1.5 inches of water per week. Don't Soak your Lawn! Light frequent watering which reaches the grass roots is recommended.
- Use Earth Friendly Fertilizer.** Earth friendly fertilizers meet state requirements for low or no phosphorus. Visit www.crw.org for a list of earth friendly fertilizers.
- Fertilize in Fall.** Fertilizing in the Fall builds grass roots. Additional fertilizer before May is rarely needed. Do not spread fertilizer if the ground is frozen.
- Sweep Fertilizer from Paved Surfaces.** Fertilizers left on sidewalks end up in storm drains, rivers, and lakes. Sweep extra pellets back onto your lawn.
- Mow Dry Leaves.** In the Fall, be sure to mow dry leaves into your lawn. This will help add organic matter and nutrients to your soil.
- Leave a Buffer Zone Near Lakes and Rivers.** Michigan law requires a "no fertilizer" buffer of at least 15 ft. near lakes and rivers.
- Avoid Weed-and-Feed Products.** Combination fertilizer and weed control products often contain unnecessary herbicides. These herbicides may cause harm to animals, plants and insects beyond the intended pests.
- Practice IPM-Integrated Pest Management.** Identify the weed or insect of concern and select the least toxic control option.