

## Another Great Lawn Idea: Manage Your Stormwater With a Rain Garden

Encourage infiltration of runoff water from your roof and driveway. Direct down spouts to a rain garden or infiltration point where vegetation will filter nutrients from the water.

Drainage from your driveway or landscaping projects can carry pollutants. Make sure there's a buffer or erosion control practice in place between your lawn, driveway or project and any water body or road ditch to minimize impacts.

Rain gardens are beautiful and can create an inviting habitat for birds and butterflies.

The native plants used in rain gardens are perennials that require less frequent care after establishment. No pesticides or fertilizers are required.

Information on creating a rain garden can be found on our website: [www.owsc.org](http://www.owsc.org).



## Make a Difference: Have a Stormwater Friendly Lawn

**Set your lawnmower to a height of 3 –4 in.**

**Leave grass clippings on the lawn.**

**Keep grass clippings and leaves out of storm drains and water bodies.**

**Mulch leaves and keep them on the lawn or compost them.**

**Use compost for fertilizer.**

**Leave an untreated buffer strip of 15-20 feet between any chemical use and a storm drain, stream or lake.**



[www.owsc.org](http://www.owsc.org)

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# Healthy Lawn, Healthy Water



*Protecting Water  
Reducing Pollution*

## Healthy Lawn Care

A healthy lawn can improve water quality by filtering, purifying and reducing stormwater runoff.

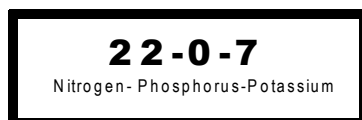
Misuse or overuse of fertilizers and pesticides can harm water resources as chemicals are carried into surface water and leached into groundwater. Unhealthy conditions for your family and pets, and more algae and weeds in the water may result.

It is possible and cost effective to manage your lawn without endangering water quality or creating health threats.

**Test Before You Treat.** A soil test can determine whether fertilizer is needed. A Cornell University study reported that only 1 in 10 lawns surveyed actually needed fertilizing. If fertilizer is necessary, apply in late May to early June or late August to early September when plant growth is lush enough to take up the chemicals.

Use fertilizers with slow-release nitrogen and zero phosphorus. Phosphorus is necessary only for a brief period of time when establishing new turf. Follow the label directions.

### Look For This Label:



**Watch the Weather.** Don't apply fertilizer or other chemicals if rain is imminent, it will wash off in surface runoff. Don't let fertilizer or chemicals fall on sidewalks or driveways where it will wash into waterways.

## Know The Pests. Not All Bugs Are Bad.

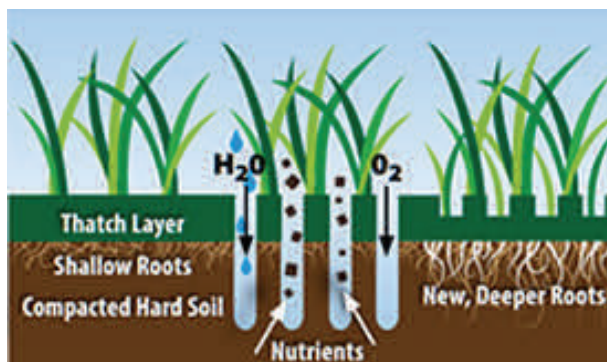
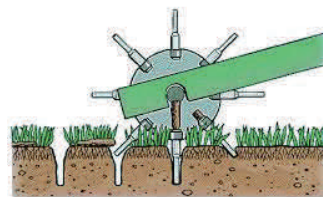
Inspect regularly to find pests early. If pests are present, decide whether they are doing sufficient damage to warrant controls. Try non-chemical controls first, such as manual removal or biocontrols. Consult Cornell Cooperative Extension for recommendations.

**Manage Thatch.** Thatch is a layer of decomposing plant tissue made up mostly of stems and roots, not grass clippings. A thin layer of thatch (up to 1/2 in.) above the soil is beneficial. A thick layer leads to increased disease and insect problems, drought stress and winter injury.

Thick thatch usually occurs on lawns that have been heavily fertilized and watered for constant lush growth. Compacted, poorly drained and acidic soil contributes to thatch problems.

Pesticide use can reduce or eliminate microorganisms that break down thatch. Mechanical removal works temporarily. Core aeration and topdressing are effective means of managing thatch.

Core aeration allows more oxygen, water and nutrients to reach root systems promoting healthy grass growth.



## Promote Dense, Healthy Growth.

- ◆ Plant disease-resistant seed.
- ◆ Cut grass 4 inches high. Never remove more than 1/3 of the blade. This promotes deeper roots, cools the roots, and shades out weeds.
- ◆ Grass establishes roots approximately as deep as it is allowed to grow tall. Deep roots require less water
- ◆ Keep mower blades sharp: shredding grass blade tips invites disease.
- ◆ Leave clippings on the lawn to decay for natural fertilizer.
- ◆ Water early in the morning, not in the evening.

## Consider Planting Ground Covers Other Than Grass.

### For example:

White Dutch clover was traditionally included in seed mixtures to "feed" the grass, as it fixes atmospheric nitrogen into the soil.



Dutch clover grows only about 4" high, reducing the need to mow. Clover is durable and soft to walk on, and doesn't "dog spot." The deep roots of clover hold soil in place better than turf grass.