



## Fall Tips for Clean Water and a Healthy Lawn

### Mow High

Keep your lawn three inches high during the fall. It helps the grass hold moisture, reduces stress and shades out weeds. By leaving clippings on your lawn, you'll need 1/3 less fertilizer.

### Mulch Your Leaves

Leaves can help enrich your lawn's soil. Chip leaves into smaller pieces by running over them several times with your lawn mower and just leave them there, to feed the lawn. If you choose not to mulch your leaves, you can rake them into your garden beds as mulch. Keep leaves and grass clippings away from storm drains and out of waterways.

### Feed in the Fall

Overfertilizing is worse for your lawn and water quality than not fertilizing at all. Contact your local Cooperative Extension Service office for a soil test to determine the proper application rates. If you fertilize once or twice a year, September is the best time. Leave a 10-25 ft buffer between where you fertilize and any lake, river, stream or open drain. The South Oakland County Healthy Lawn and Garden Technical Committee and the Partners for Clean Water recommend the following types of fertilizer:

- Low or no phosphorus. (5:1 Nitrogen to Phosphorus ratio)
- Slow-release nitrogen (At least 50% of the nitrogen should be slow release. Avoid quick-release and water-soluble fertilizers.)
- Pesticide/herbicide free (separate, spot-treatment is recommended.)

For information on which brands are available in SE Michigan and where to purchase them, call the Clinton River Watershed Council at (248) 601-0606.

### Help Your Lawn "Breathe".

Fall is the perfect time to aerate your lawn. This allows air, water and nutrients to reach down into the soil where nutrients can be produced for your grass. Rent or have your landscape company use a core aerator on your lawn.

### Time to Patch

Seed or sod bare patches of lawn to prevent soil from washing into lakes and streams and to keep the soil loose. Loosen the soil with a rake, apply a thin layer of compost, and then apply the appropriate variety of grass seed and water evenly and regularly. A layer of straw will help hold moisture in and protect the seeds from wildlife. For large areas of lawn, use grass varieties that require less water and fertilizer. Or, consider filling the spot with a native tree, shrub or perennials!

### Pests and Weeds

Homeowners that follow healthy lawn care practices will have fewer weed and pest problems. If you must treat, use a product designed to treat the specific problem. Many insects and fungi are beneficial to a healthy lawn. Broad-spectrum pesticides kill the helpful ones as well as the problem ones. Spot-treat wherever possible. Corn gluten products are an effective treatment for broadleaf weeds, and act as a natural, slow-release fertilizer. Maintain a 10-25 foot buffer where no pesticides are used, along waterways.

*For more information, contact the Clinton River Watershed Council  
101 Main St. Suite 100 Rochester, MI 48307  
248-601-0606; [www.clintonriver.org](http://www.clintonriver.org)*