

A Citizen's Guide to Lawn Care

Using healthy lawn care practices is one step toward cleaner streams and lakes - even if you don't have waterfront property.

Healthy lawns grow on healthy soil.

Using proper soil preparation and lawn maintenance practices will help to build healthy soil and vigorous, deep-rooted lawns. These lawns are more resistant to disease, tolerate some insect and drought damage, and will out-compete many weeds. The Practices recommended here can help make lawns healthier for our families, protect beneficial soil organisms, and protect our environment too.



Mulching mowers

For clean mowing that leaves no visible clippings, consider buying a "mulching" mower. This mower will chop clippings finely and blow them down into the lawn so they disappear and won't be tracked into your house. Check the spring issues of *Consumer Reports* for current ratings of mulching mowers. The rechargeable electric mulching mowers are quiet, clean and grasscycle very well.

Set mowing heights up to about 2 inches for most lawns

(except $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch on bentgrass lawns) to develop deeper roots and crowd out weeds.

Remove only one-third of the grass length at each mowing

Try to mow weekly in spring. Cutting too much at once stresses the grass.

Leave the clippings on the lawn

"Grasscycling" provides free fertilizer (at least $\frac{1}{4}$ of your lawn's needs), helps lawns grow greener and denser, and doesn't cause thatch buildup.

You can grasscycle with your existing mower

For best results, keep the blade sharp, mow when the grass is dry, and mow a little more often in the spring. Clippings left scattered on the surface will break down quickly. If there are clumps, mow again to break them up. Push mowers work great for grasscycling.



Leave a buffer of natural vegetation along streams and lakes

To filter pollutants and protect fish and wildlife. These buffers should include shrubs and trees to shade the stream, and groundcovers of native plants or low-maintenance grasses that are left unmowed and wild. Avoid use of pesticides or soluble fertilizers near streams, ditches, wetlands, or shorelines.

Grass grows best on well-drained soil in full sun or partial shade

Steep slopes are hard to mow and water. Call WSU/King Country Cooperative Extension (206-205-3100) for information on alternative plants or grasses that do well in shady, steep, or wet sites. Ask for Fact Sheet #77, "Groundcovers".

Natural Lawn & Garden

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