



GRASS CLIPPINGS & FERTILIZER USE

Your lawn practices are a big deal to Wellesley's receiving waters and even more importantly to the Charles River! Whether you manage the lawn yourself or hire a landscaper there are some simple steps that you can take that make a big difference. These include leaving the clippings on the lawn, cutting with a sharp blade and at a time when the grass is dry, grow the grass taller, reduce, where possible, lawn areas and minimize or eliminate fertilizer use.

You see, yard debris such as leaves, grass clippings and other organic plant material are sources of stormwater pollution. Yard debris, if blown into the street, causes the storm drainage system to clog and eventually to flood. Our stormwater drainage system does not have a mechanism to pretreat nutrient rich yard debris from entering our streams, rivers and lakes.

Good lawn management practices for you to consider are;

- Grasscycling or recycling the clipping by leaving them on the lawn. This provides a food source for the lawn, improves moisture, saves time, energy and pollution related to capturing and transporting the clipping to the RDF.
- Making lower cuts and growing taller grass. Many reputable landscaping professionals recommend cutting the grass a little higher between 2 and 3 inches, and reducing mowing frequency and watering needs.
- Be sure to sweep excess fertilizer and grass clippings from the pavement back onto your lawn so that they don't wash into storm drains. Consider using the grass clippings, which can be up to 80% water and are loaded with nitrogen, in a home composter.
- Consider modifying your landscape to include sustainable plantings or to change lawns into planting beds of ivy, pachysandra, or -periwinkle, or maybe consider a wildflower garden!

Some important considerations for fertilizer use are;

- When it rains, the water washes fertilizer and other pollutants from our lawns over our driveways, sidewalks, and roads, into our storm drains where it flows directly and untreated into our rivers, lakes, and streams.
- Test your soil and apply fertilizers only as needed
- Use Phosphorus-free fertilizers (the middle number is "0")
- Use slow-acting fertilizers
- Follow instructions and do not over-fertilize

Did you know that a 1/2 acre lawn area in Wellesley can produce over 3 tons, or about 260 barrels of grass clippings annually!

More interesting information on lawn management and stormwater can be found at Mass. Department of Environmental Protection's "don't trash the grass" campaign, or at Sustainable Landscapes UMass Extension, OrganicLandCare.net, and at ThinkblueMassachusetts.org.