



## PROTECT YOUR DRINKING WATER: LAWN AND GARDEN MAINTENANCE



### WHAT IS THE MOST COMMON MISTAKE IN LAWN CARE?

We pamper our lawns and gardens. Over-application of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides waste money, destroy plants, and pollute water. Lawns that are mowed to short develop weak root systems and require frequent watering and maintenance. Removing grass clippings starves the soil of beneficial nutrients and the organic matter necessary to prevent soil compaction.

## LAWN CARE TIPS

**Grass clippings CLOG storm drains and cause water back ups!!!**  
**Once mowed, sweep grass clippings back onto your lawn.**

### ✓ MOW HIGH

- Mowing high is cheaper and easier to maintain.
- Taller grass.....
  - gets more sun so it is better able to make its own food and does not need as much fertilizer
  - tolerates hot and dry conditions better
  - develops deeper roots, enabling it to reach deep into the soil for water
  - shades the soil and reduces evaporation
  - contains fewer weeds because it shades them out
- Keep your lawn three inches or higher and never cut off more than 1/3 of the blade each time you mow.

### ✓ MULCH LEAVES & GRASS CLIPPINGS INTO YOUR LAWN

- Leaves and grass clippings are the best food for your lawn because they are a natural fertilizer rich in nutrients and organic matter.
- Grass clippings on the lawn returns 60% of the nitrogen and 100% of the phosphorus to the soil.
- Mulching leaves and grass clippings may mean that you won't have to fertilize at all.

### ✓ SPREAD FERTILIZERS ON LIGHTLY AND USE CAUTION

- Check product labels and follow directions carefully.
- Do not over-apply fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides or fungicides.
- Fertilizers can pollute your drinking water.
- If you fertilize right before it rains, the fertilizer won't have time to soak into the soil and will run directly into surface waters. **NEVER FERTILIZE BEFORE IT RAINS!**

### ✓ CHOOSE THE RIGHT SEED MIX AND NATIVE PLANTS FOR YOUR AREA

- The best seed mix for Michigan will contain Kentucky bluegrass, fescues and perennial rye-grass. Kentucky bluegrass needs sun.
- Native and drought-resistant plants and grasses will conserve water and require fewer pesticides and fertilizers.
- For more information, contact the local County Conservation District.

### ✓ BE SMART ABOUT WATERING

- If you have kept your lawn higher, you may not need to water it.
- In the hot, dry summer, grass grows slowly, and the blades turn brown, but the plants don't die. If you can bear this stage, the grass will green after it rains.
- If you choose to water the grass, one inch of water per week is the rule. Light, frequent applications are best.