

# LAWN CARE and Your Lake: Whatever goes on your lawn may end up in our lake and the Chesapeake Bay!!

Can you improve your lawn care practices? Here are some tips that will promote lake health, and save you time and money, while assuring a good-looking lawn.

## Test soil regularly

- Recommended frequency is every 2-3 years.
- Fertilizer and soil amendments are most effective when appropriate to your specific conditions.
- Acidity levels around 6.5pH help in retention of nutrients.

## Choose grass types wisely

- Use grass types appropriate for conditions of sun, shade, acidity level, slope, etc.
- Consider darker green varieties, which require less nitrogen and water.
- Select drought and disease resistant grasses.

## Minimize the size of your lawn

## Fertilize intelligently

- Timing and amount depends on the type of grass and soil, e.g. summer for warm season grasses like Bermuda, fall for cool season grasses like fescue and bluegrass.
- Select environmentally safe products and follow label instructions carefully.
- **Do not** fertilize in the spring or when grass is dormant or brown.
- Use low-phosphorous, slow-release nitrogen fertilizer.
- Apply evenly, preferably with a drop spreader but not by hand.
- **Do not fertilize within 10 feet of a ditch, a stream or the lake.**

## Mow appropriately

- Adjust blade to maintain grass height at 2 ½ to 3 inches to create a stronger root system, which requires less water and fertilizer.
- Remove no more than 1/3 of grass blade length in one cutting.
- Mow when grass is dry and not drought stressed.
- Mulch the clippings, leaving them on the lawn to reduce the need for nitrogen fertilizer.
- Sharpen mower blades at least once a year.



## Irrigate efficiently

- Early morning is the best time to water.
- Irrigate slowly and deeply, with one or two waterings, for a total of ¾ to 1 inch weekly.
- Adjust sprinklers to avoid watering solid surfaces, e.g. driveways or sidewalks.

## Apply pesticides sparingly

- Use good landscaping practices, the best defense against disease.
- Identify any problem **BEFORE** using pesticides or fungicides.
- Select environmentally safe products and follow label instructions carefully.
- Mix up enough pesticide for only one application to avoid storage of toxic chemicals.
- **Do not spray near a stream, drainage ditch, the lake or when there is wind.**



## DID YOU KNOW . . . ?

**On average, homeowners use up to 10 times more chemical fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides per acre than farmers.**

**There are good alternatives to a traditional lawn, such as ground cover and mulch.**

**Pet waste left on the ground contains nutrients and pathogens that can contaminate our lake.**

**Thatch buildup is caused by over watering and excessive fertilizer, not by leaving grass cuttings on the lawn.**

**A rain gauge is a good tool to measure the amount of water delivered by a sprinkler.**

**Sharp mower blades prevent turf damage, water loss, and an easy path for disease.**

**One hour of running a lawn mower produces as much pollution as driving a car 350 miles.**



## For More Information:

Virginia Cooperative Extension publications in printable form are available at <http://www.ext.vt.edu/vce/publications/> — including:

#426-612 Easy Reference to Sustainable Landscape Management and Water Quality Protection

#426-723 Home Landscape Practices to Protect Water Quality

#430-003 Home Lawn Fertilization in Virginia: Frequently Asked Questions

#430-011 Lawn Fertilization in Virginia

#426-717 Maintaining Lawns

#426-719 Selecting Turfgrass

#426-718 Establishing Lawns

U.S. EPA/Chesapeake Bay Program "Better Backyard" [www.chesapeakebay.net](http://www.chesapeakebay.net); 1-800-YOUR-BAY

VCE & VA Dept. of Conservation & Recreation – "Tips on Keeping Your Lawn Green And the Chesapeake Bay Clean" 1-877-429-2837

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – "Do's and Don'ts Around the Home" [www.epa.gov/owow/nps/dosdont.html](http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/dosdont.html)

Soil testing kits are available from any VA Cooperative Extension Office. For Fluvanna County call 434-591-1950.

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This is the third in a series of publications that have been developed as a cooperative educational program to assist you and your neighbors in keeping our lake, the Rivanna River and the Chesapeake Bay healthy, now and in the years to come.

Our thanks to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the Chesapeake Bay Program and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for their support through the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program. Thanks also to you, the members of the Lake Monticello Owners' Association. The Lake Health & Storm Water Management Program is an example of your dues at work for our community.

For more information about this educational program and how you can help, contact the

**LAKE MONTICELLO OWNERS' ASSOCIATION**  
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# Lawn Care and Your Lake

**You don't have to choose  
between a healthy lake and  
a beautiful lawn.**



Lake Health Publication #3