

Why All The Concern?

Nearly 40% of the streams in Ohio and across the U.S. are not meeting the "fishable / swimmable" goals of the Clean Water Act. Fertilizers and pesticides carried by stormwater runoff are a *significant* source of pollution impacting the health of our rivers, lakes and streams.

Plant A Rain Garden

Help keep Hamilton County streams clean by planting a rain garden. Rain gardens look like any other flower garden, but they are built in a shallow depression that is designed to collect rain water and slowly filter it into the ground over a period of a day or two. They help keep our streams clean by filtering "storm water runoff" before it enters local waterways. Rain gardens also help reduce problems associated with localized flooding by encouraging water to soak into the ground. Just as important, rain gardens add beauty to our community. Anyone can build a rain garden on their own. Creating one requires nothing more high tech than a shovel. See the manual for instruction on how to build a rain garden specifically for southwest Ohio on this webpage: www.hcswcd.org/newsletters-and-publication.html.

IN SUMMARY.....

- ◆ **TEST, DON'T GUESS**
TEST your soil fertility
- ◆ **FERTILIZE CONSERVATIVELY**
Follow recommendations from soil test results. Call (513)772-7645 for help interpreting your test results. Avoid adding phosphorus fertilizers if possible.
- ◆ **BEING GREEN CAN SAVE YOU GREEN \$\$**
Only add the nutrients (fertilizer) your lawn needs.

Learn to identify and spot treat weed and insect problem areas instead of the whole yard
- ◆ **IF GRASS WON'T GROW, TRY NATIVES**
Once established, native plants require very little maintenance. Additional watering and fertilizing aren't necessary - they tolerate the extreme wet and dry conditions that we experience in Hamilton County. Natives can be very attractive and can be selected for color/interest at different times of year (including winter!). Deeper root systems (some over 10 feet) encourage water infiltration. For a list of plants native to SW Ohio, please see our rain garden manual on our website or see the Rain Gardens & Landscape Storm Water Management Options program area of OSU Extension.

The secret to a healthy lawn is to
work WITH nature!

Lawn Care

Keeping it Environmentally
Friendly in Hamilton County, OH



Picture a healthy green lawn: perfect for lounging, great for ball games and cookouts, a real asset to your home. But did you know that your lawn - and how you take care of it - can also help the environment? This means creating conditions for grass to thrive and resist damage from weeds, disease, and insect pests. It means setting realistic goals for your lawn, whether you or a professional lawn care service will be doing the work. And if you choose to use herbicides or pesticides, it means using them with care so as to get the most benefit with as little risk as possible. Caring for your lawn in an environmentally sensible way can have a bigger impact (including cost savings...) than you might think. Your lawn care activities, along with everyone else's, can make a difference to the environment - and that's why taking care of the environment begins in our own backyards.

Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District
Save Local Waters Regional SW Collaborative
Hamilton County Storm Water District

Steps To Take For A Healthy Lawn

- 1. TEST YOUR SOIL!!** - The most important step to a healthy lawn is healthy soil. Obtain soil samples from your lawn (procedures for doing this can be found at www.hcswcd.org/soil-fertility.html) and send the sample to a lab for analysis. Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District provides soil testing for a nominal fee. Visit the website to learn more and to order kits - or find a lab online such as www.spectrumanalytic.com.
- 2. KNOW WHAT YOUR LAWN NEEDS**
Over-application of fertilizers is costly and unnecessary. Once your soil test results are back, only add the fertilizer your lawn needs. You will save money, and limit the over-application of phosphorus which can have a huge effect on the environment. Excess phosphorus washes into storm drains and waterways when it rains or if the lawn is over-watered. The excess phosphorus stimulates harmful algae growth in streams, ponds and lakes, which is unsightly at best. At worst, the algae growth depletes oxygen from the water, causing harm or death to aquatic life. If you use a lawn care company, discuss your soil needs and ask for low or no phosphorus fertilizer. Most soils in Hamilton County contain high phosphorus, calcium and magnesium and have a neutral or high pH.
- 3. USE PESTICIDES AND HERBICIDES SPARINGLY OR NOT AT ALL**
Once your soil is in balance nutrient-wise, your lawn should flourish. Hand weed the few weeds that pop up, or spot spray. Applying herbicides over your entire lawn is often



unnecessary, expensive and harms the environment. The same is true of pesticides - if you see a pest problem, spot treat it. Spraying the entire yard will kill beneficial insects as well as harmful ones.

4. MOW HIGHER

By mowing your grass at 2½ - 3½ inches, your lawn gets a chance to send down deep roots, helping the plants survive dry weather with less watering. In addition, the longer grass makes it difficult for weed seed to germinate - less herbicides!

5. WATER DEEPLY & LESS OFTEN

By watering slowly and deeply, grass roots will grow down deep into the soil. Frequent, shallow watering encourages the roots to stay near the surface causing problems during dry spells.

6. SET REALISTIC GOALS

- Did you know that a lawn with 15% weeds looks practically weed-free to the average observer? Having a few weeds or insect pests living in your yard means you also have beneficial insects and other organisms that help keep soil healthy and pests under control. Not all insects that you see are harmful.
- Grass just doesn't do well in certain spots. How about planting a shade loving ground cover under that tree? Consider putting in a rain garden in locations that receive drainage from sloped areas. Fill them with native plants that thrive under these special conditions. Many books are written on this subject. You can also contact Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District or Save Local Waters for more information.

Healthy Lawns Mean A Healthy Environment

- Healthy grass provides feeding ground for birds, who find it a rich source of insects, worms, and other food.
- Thick grass prevents soil erosion, filters contaminants from rainwater, and absorbs many types of airborne pollutants, like dust and soot.
- Grass is highly efficient at converting carbon dioxide to oxygen, a process that helps clean the air. Caring for your lawn properly can both enhance its appearance and contribute to its environmental benefits.
- A healthy lawn will out-compete most weeds, survive insect attacks and fend off most diseases.



Website:
www.hcswcd.org

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Regional Storm Water Collaborative



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