**Green Lawns for Blue Water**

You probably know that pesticides and fertilizers are powerful chemicals that can injure wildlife if overused, but a 2010 report from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) indicates that a “no-care” approach to lawn care can be bad for our water too. The MPCA study showed that lawns given no fertilizer at all contributed just as much phosphorus to stormwater runoff as lawns given several applications per year of phosphorus fertilizer. The reason is that poor quality lawns often suffer from erosion during rain or snow melt. Soil and sediment carry phosphorus to our lakes and rivers, contributing to excess algae growth.

Here are a few tips for healthier lawns and lakes:

* The less lawn the better. If there are parts of your lawn that you only visit when you are mowing, consider replacing these areas with gardens, shrubs or even native plantings. Go to [www.BlueThumb.org](http://www.BlueThumb.org) to find the best native plants for your yard.
* Take care of the lawn you do have. Mow regularly with a sharp blade to prevent injury to your grass. Taller grass (3 inches) will have deeper roots and will be more resistant to drought and weeds. The University of Minnesota Extension recommends one application of non-phosphorus, slow-release nitrogen fertilizer per year, generally around Labor Day.
* Water less. Frequent watering encourages shallow root growth, which makes the grass weaker over time. Instead, give your grass one inch of water per week on weeks when there is no rain. Remember, the water we use for our lawns comes from the same aquifers we need for drinking water.
* Rake up, sweep up, clean up. Grass clippings, leaves and fertilizer on sidewalks and driveways get washed into storm sewers that connect to our waterways. Keep your pavement clean to protect our water. [Insert ordinance info here]