Keeping our streams, lakes, and groundwater clean is important to all of

us. You may not think that the fertilizer spread on your lawn and garden is a source of pollution. However, we are all part of a larger **watershed** community and the cumulative effect of our lawn care chemicals have resulted in a large scale water pollution problem. Whether you manage your own lawn and landscape or hire a professional, the following information will help you make environmentally-sound choices.

No matter where we live, the quality of our water affects the quality of our lives. **We *can* have it all… healthy "green" lawns and blue lakes!** By following the 4Rs, we have the ability and responsibility to improve our soil and water resources for generations to come. Follow these effective lawn care tips today 4R tomorrow!

Hiring a Lawn Care Provider?

Questions for Green Thumbs (to avoid green water!)

1. Do you "feed the soil instead of the plants?" Explain which of your practices contribute to healthy soil.
2. Do you have a pesticide-free lawn care program?
3. Do you offer spot treatment applications for specifically identified pests?
4. Are your products non-toxic?
5. What method of weed control will you use?
6. What types of fertilizers do you use?
7. What is your typical fertilizer application schedule?
8. Will you adjust the cutting schedule to the growth rates of the lawn as it changes over the season?
9. Do you use mulching blades on your equipment and leave clippings on site?

THE LAKE ERIE CENTRAL BASIN WORK GROUP

The Lake Erie Central Basin Work Group consists of the Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Portage, Summit, and Trumbull County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Contact your local District for more information.

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4R Tomorrow:

A Homeowner's Guide to Lawn Care

THE LAKE ERIE CENTRAL BASIN WORK GROUP

For the sake of our Great Lake!

Fertilizer Basics: **R**ight Type, **R**ight Rate, **R**ight Time and **R**ight Place

The 4 Rs of Fertilization

Right TYPE: Have your soil tested to determine fertilizer needs and choose a slow-release fertilizer that is free of phosphorous.
Best Management Practice: Choose phosphate-free organic fertilizer.

Right RATE: Soil test results will supply you with the appropriate fertilizer rate. Do not exceed the recommended rate and **never** apply more than 1.5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

Best Management Practice: Use mulching blades on your mower and leave the grass clippings on the lawn.

Right TIME: September is the best time to fertilize lawns when cool season grasses are actively growing.
Best Management Practice: Never apply fertilizer when rain and wind are in the forecast.

Right PLACE: Proper fertilization techniques save money and protect waterways and wildlife. Avoid fertilizing near streams, ditches, hard surfaces, and slopes.
Best Management Practice: Incorporate native plantings near streams, ditches, and slopes to better intercept pollutants before they enter waterways.

LOOKING AHEAD 4R TOMORROW

Healthy Lawn Care Calendar for Homeowners

A month-by-month reference guide to keep your yard green and our water clean!

March:
- Rake up leaves, twigs, and winter debris and start a new compost pile to dump yard waste for the year
- Sharpen blades, maintain mower, and bag the first cut - keeping a grass height of 2 inches

April:
- As soon as the forsythia and daffodils start to bloom, apply corn gluten meal or a pre-emergent to prevent weed seeds from germinating
- Rake, dethatch, and core aerate your lawn then top dress with compost
- Spot treat or hand pull any weeds prior to seed head development
- If using compost teas, apply once a month to entire lawn from April - November

May:
- Start recycling grass clippings on your lawn or in a compost bin
- Spot treat any weeds prior to seed head development
- Apply milky spore or beneficial nematodes for grub control
- Apply organic fertilizer or slow release, phosphorus-free fertilizer *per soil test results* (taken in previous fall)

June:
- Raise the mowing height to 3 - 3.5 inches
- Spot treat any weeds and monitor insects using natural controls

July:
- Raise the mowing height to 3.5 - 4 inches to maintain moisture and increase root depth
- Monitor insects and irrigation, watering deeply but infrequently

August:
- Overseed entire lawn between August 15th and September 15th
- Continue irrigation if needed or allow lawn to go dormant

September:
- Around Labor Day (sometime in late August or early September), core aerate as needed and apply organic fertilizer or slow release, phosphorus-free fertilizer
- Lower your mowing height back to 3 - 3.5 inches

October:
- Perform a soils test and send to the lab
- Mulch or bag any leaves while mowing and put bagged leaves in compost pile

November:
- Lower the mowing height (2 inches or so) without scalping the lawn and mulch or bag leaves while mowing
- Be sure the lawn is free of large leaves and debris
- Apply the final batch of compost tea, if appropriate

Over the winter:
- Reduce lawn traffic and let it rest
- Review your lab results, set up next year's program, and order spring supplies