



WNRC

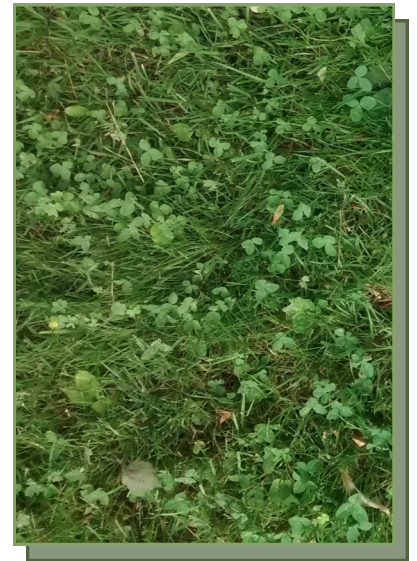
*Educational Series*



Urban Conservation Series

## Lawn Care BMP's for Water Quality Protection

Recent surveys of soils within Vermont lawns, indicate that most lawns do not need any additional fertilizers. There is a tendency when applying fertilizers, to think more is better. This results in excessive nutrients flowing off of the land and into local bodies of water.



### Impact of Excessive Nutrients

Excessive nutrients that enter our waterways feed algae. When the algae "bloom" it can shift the pH of the water, decrease oxygen levels, cover fish breeding habitat, clog intake pipes, cause taste and odor issues, discourage recreation, lower property values. The nitrogen in fertilizers can actually trigger a toxic harmful algal bloom in some species of cyanobacteria.

Excessive nitrogen can damage sensitive native plant species, and alter the soil chemical composition allowing for invasive species to take hold. Excessive nitrogen can cause the depletion of calcium, phosphorus and magnesium in the soil.

### Lawn Care Best Management Practices

There are practices that you can implement to have a healthy, sustainable lawn.

- Water your lawn in the morning, water deeply and infrequently. Grasses will go dormant and survive times of drought. There are species of grasses that don't need frequent watering.
- Leave clover in the lawn. Clover adds nitrogen to the soil naturally.

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- Reduce the size of your lawn. Add a beautiful native or naturalized garden that will attract butterflies, birds and pollinators.
- Mow only when there is rain in the short-term forecast. Maintain the grass height between 3-4 inches. Never cut off more than 1/3 of the blade. Maintain your equipment and keep your blade sharp.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn. Grass clippings add back nutrients naturally. Never pile clippings in or near a body of water, or push/ blow them into a storm-drain.
- Maintain a buffer of native plants, trees and shrubs along waterways. It is recommended to have a 50 ft buffer along streams and a 100 ft buffer along lakes.
- If fertilization is needed, do so only in the fall. Spring rains will wash the nutrients into waterways.
- Use grass species that are acclimated to the local climate zone. Many of the mixes that are sold require regular watering, mowing and fertilization, because they are not meant for our zone. There are grass seed mixes available that are less expensive, require limited to no maintenance and are cold hardy.



For more information on urban conservation practices and water quality protection, please visit: [www.winooskinrcd.org](http://www.winooskinrcd.org)

The Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District is one of 14 conservation districts throughout Vermont. It encompasses all of Chittenden and Washington County as well as parts of Orange County (Orange, Williamstown and Washington). The District relies on grants and individual donations to complete its conservation work. The WNRCD focuses its resources on completing conservation projects within the areas of agricultural assistance, forestland enhancement, urban conservation and watershed stewardship. For more information on Conservation initiatives within the District, please visit: [www.winooskinrcd.org](http://www.winooskinrcd.org)



**Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District**  
617 Comstock Rd, Suite 1, Berlin, VT 05602  
(802) 778-3178 [info@winooskinrcd.org](mailto:info@winooskinrcd.org)  
[www.winooskinrcd.org](http://www.winooskinrcd.org)  
[www.winooskinrcd.wix.com/watershed-notes-blog](http://www.winooskinrcd.wix.com/watershed-notes-blog)