



Stormwater Utility Newsletter

City of Sun Prairie

Working together to improve water quality and protect your property

Lawns and Pollution—Can You Pass the Test?

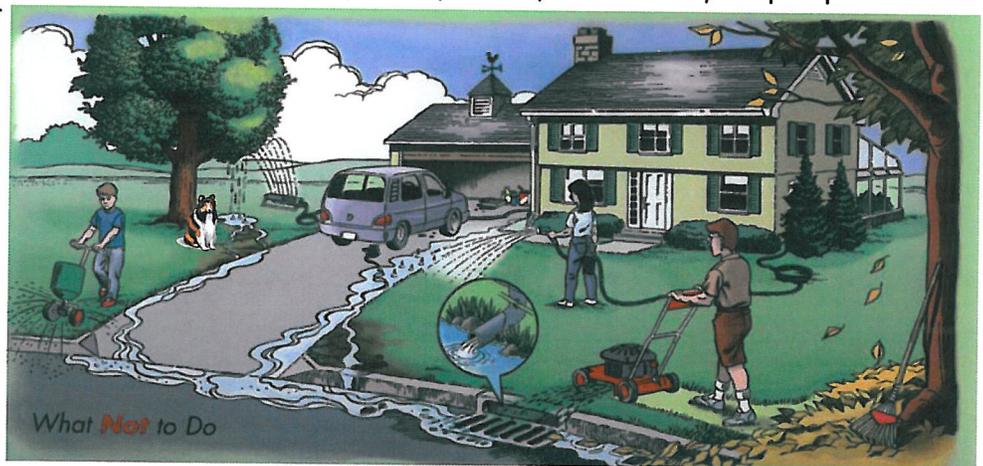
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Are you interested in trying a different approach to lawn care? One that would mean less work and pollution while creating a more beautiful natural habitat in your backyard?

It's not difficult, and it's not expensive. Follow a few simple steps and you'll not only help improve the health of your community, but perhaps your own health as well.

This picture shows 8 instances of common household practices that can cause serious pollution. Can you spot them?

Don't peek at the answers!



Used by permission, Department of Horticulture, Cornell University

Answers

- ♣ Grass clippings are being blown into the street and storm drain. Their high phosphorus levels can pollute streams, rivers and lakes.

BETTER: Return clippings to the lawn, compost them or till them into gardens or flowerbeds.

- ♣ Leaves raked into the street also end up in storm drains, causing pollution.

BETTER: Treat them the same as the lawn clippings above.

- ♣ The boy using a rotary spreader leaves fertilizer on paved surfaces where it will get washed into storm drains.

BETTER: Test your lawn before using fertilizer. Call 262-4364 (UW), for information. If fertilizers are needed, use a drop spreader.

- ♣ The weak turf in the driveway corner leaves soil unprotected. Sediment can wash into storm drains.

BETTER: Seed and mulch or install sod.

- ♣ The water from the sprinkler washes dog waste into the storm drain.

BETTER: Pick up pet waste and dispose of it by washing it down the toilet or burying it in the yard. Never bury it by a vegetable garden.

- ♣ The woman is over-watering, causing runoff down the driveway.

BETTER: Apply about one-inch of water, once a week. Reduce watering based on recent and forecasted precipitation.

- ♣ Fluids from the leaky van and improperly stored and handled products in the garage are washed down the driveway and into storm drains.

BETTER: Maintain the van properly. Place leaky containers in another container and take them to 2302 Fish Hatchery Rd. (Dane County Cleansweep program). Call 294-5366 for hours.

- ♣ Downspouts from the house are discharging into the driveway, washing pollutants and soil from weak turf along the edge of the driveway into the storm sewer.

BETTER: Discharge in a spot where water can soak into the soil while moving away from the house. Alternatively, use a rain barrel to catch water from the downspouts for watering gardens and lawns.



More Lawncare Tips

You wouldn't think that lawn care is a major contributor to pollution, but you'd be wrong. Grass clippings and fertilizers wash directly into storm drains every time it rains. And contrary to popular belief, the storm sewer empties—not into a wastewater treatment plant—but directly into our lakes and streams.

Tips for Lawn Care

Have your lawn tested before you fertilize. Healthy lawns may not need annual applications. Call the UW at 262-4364 for details.

Let grass grow taller (no shorter than 2 inches). Clipping the lawn too short or too often weakens grass and allows weeds to grow faster.

Keep grass clippings out of the storm drain. Sweep grass clippings back onto your lawn and they'll serve as a *great natural fertilizer*.

Compost! Compost made of leaves, grass clippings, fruit and vegetable

scraps, coffee grounds, and egg shells can fertilize plants and enrich your garden. Never add dairy, meat or fish products, fats, grease, lard, or oils.

Don't mow during the heat of the day. Newly cut grass blades lose water quickly.

Construct a rain garden. This shallow depression with native flowering plants and grasses helps soak up rainwater and melted snow while enhancing the beauty of your yard. The site for the rain garden should be placed strategically to intercept water runoff.

Tips for Watering

Water infrequently. Water no more than once a week, for normal soils.

Water early in the morning. Water applied in the afternoon evaporates too quickly, and watering in the evening can encourage disease problems.



The EPA estimates that we spill 17 million gallons of fuel each year when we refuel small engines.

That's more than the Exxon Valdez spilled in the Gulf of Alaska accident.

And using your lawn-mower for one hour is equivalent to the pollution generated by driving a new car **11 hours**.



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