



Healthy Lawn CARE TIPS

SOCWA, Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority 3910 W. Webster Road, Royal Oak, MI 48073-2761, 248-288-5150

Cut It High...Let It Lie!

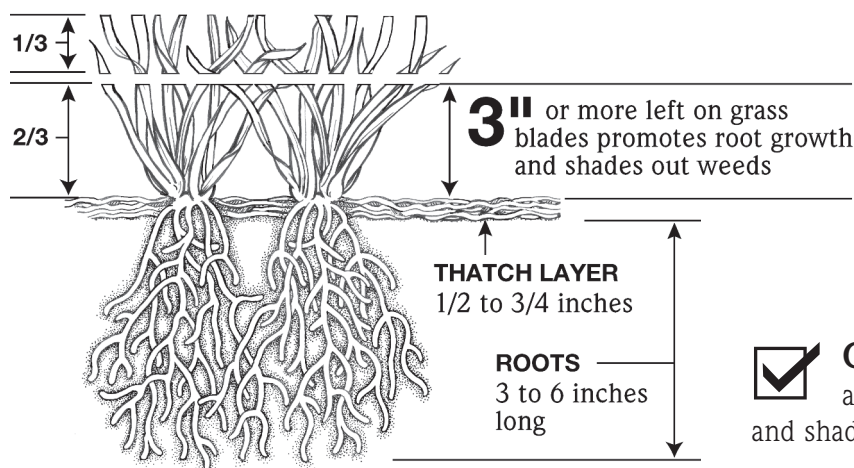
Updated January 2014

For further information...

SOCWA Healthy Lawn Care Information
www.socwa.org/lawns_gardens.shtml

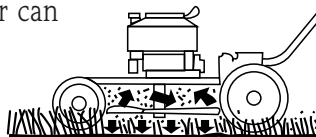
MSU Turfgrass Science
www.turf.msu.edu

Oakland County Plant and Pest Hotline
248-858-0902



Healthy Lawn Checklist

- ☒ **Mulch Your Grass Clippings.** Let short clips fall back on the lawn. Clippings are a source of nitrogen, so fertilizer can be reduced by 25% or more. Clippings do not cause thatch!

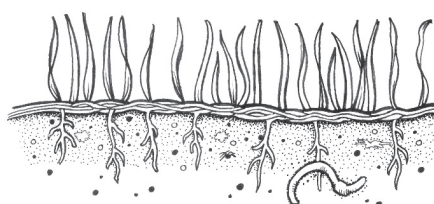


- ☒ **Test Soil for Nutrients & Organic Matter Content.** Michigan State University offers a soil test kit as a self-mailer for \$25.00. Customers purchase the box, send the sample via mail to the MSU soil test lab, and receive results via e-mail. The customer then references an MSU website to obtain specific fertilizer recommendations. The self-mailer soil test kit is available from the MSU bookstore (www.bookstore.msue.msu.edu) or through Oakland County MSU Extension (248-858-0902).

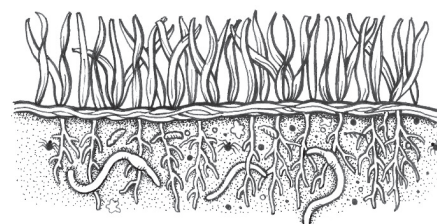
- ☒ **Build Soil Organic Matter – to 5% or More.** Healthy soil has 5% or more organic matter. The organic matter provides a natural reservoir of nutrients and holds water. To assess your soil, test for basic nutrients and organic matter every one to three years.

- ☒ **Cut High.** Leave 3 inches on the grass blade after cutting. Tall grass promotes root growth and shades out weeds.
- ☒ **Aerate Compacted Soil.** Use a core aerator to remove finger-like plugs of grass and soil – or hire a landscape service. Aeration improves drainage and allows water and oxygen to reach the grass roots.
- ☒ **Rake Compost Into the Lawn.** Rake 1/2 inch of compost into an established lawn. Leave half of the grass blade exposed to sunlight and air. Compost adds microorganisms, nutrients and organic matter, helping to build soil fertility.
- ☒ **Water the Lawn to Minimize Stress.** A green lawn in Michigan needs .5 to 1.5 inches of water per week. Don't soak your lawn; watering should not produce puddles. Light, frequent watering which reaches the grass roots is recommended by Michigan State University. Lawn dormancy is a natural response to drought. However, some water may be necessary during an extended drought of more than a month.

HEALTHY SOIL HAS HIGH ORGANIC MATTER CONTENT

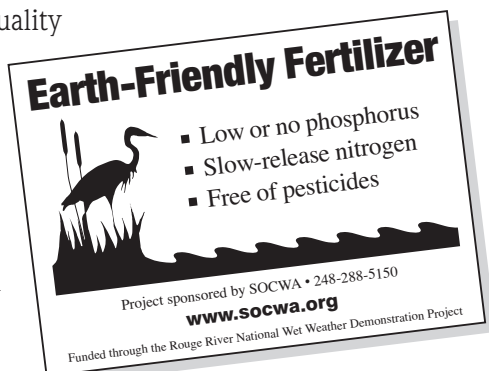


LOW ORGANIC MATTER



HIGH ORGANIC MATTER

- ☒ **Select Earth-Friendly Fertilizers.** Earth-friendly fertilizers meet state requirements for low or no phosphorus. Slow-release nitrogen protects water quality and supports healthy grass. Look for the green label at participating retailers. For a list of recommended fertilizers, see www.socwa.org.



- ☒ **Fertilize in the Fall for Best Results. Do Not Fertilize Before May.** Fall fertilization builds grass roots. Additional fertilizer before May is rarely needed. Do not spread fertilizer if the ground is frozen.

- ☒ **Sweep Fertilizer from Paved Surfaces.** Fertilizer left on sidewalks and driveways can easily wash into storm drains, rivers, and lakes. Sweep fertilizer pellets back onto the lawn.

- ☒ **Mow Dry Leaves.** In the Fall, mow dry leaves into the lawn. A shallow layer of leaf fragments will decompose quickly and contribute organic matter and nutrients to the soil system.

- ☒ **Leave a “No Fertilizer” Buffer Zone Near Lakes and Rivers.** A “no fertilizer” buffer of 20 – 25 feet or more is recommended by many water quality experts. Instead of turfgrass at the water’s edge, consider planting native grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs that trap pollutants.

- ☒ **Avoid Weed-and-Feed Combination Products.** Combination fertilizer and weed control products often add unnecessary herbicides to the landscape. Herbicides may pose a threat to animals, plants and insects beyond the intended weeds or pests. Instead, spot treat or hand dig weeds.

- ☒ **Practice IPM – Integrated Pest Management.** Identify the weed or insect of concern and select the least toxic control option. Read the label and follow directions – the label is the law. Telephone the National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) at 1-800-858-7378 for chemical impact information.

- ☒ **Select a Lawn Service that Offers the Healthy Lawn Care Program for Watershed Protection.** Some lawn service providers have been endorsed by the Michigan Green Industry Association (MGIA) to offer the “Healthy Lawn Care Program for Watershed Protection” to their customers. For a list of endorsed companies, contact MGIA at 248-646-4992 or see www.Landscape.org, section titled professionals/contractors.

Under this lawn care program option, fertilizers and pesticides are REDUCED to levels that sustain healthy turf and help protect water quality. Lawn care programs are tailored to the specific needs of the landscape – rather than an “automatic” application of inputs.

Phosphorus Fertilizer Restrictions for Lawns

REVISED IN NOVEMBER 2013

In January 1, 2012, home and commercial lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus became subject to certain restrictions under the Michigan Fertilizer Act (Public Act 299 of 2010). In November 2013, the Act was again amended to allow additional low-phosphorus lawn fertilizers, including “natural fertilizers” and “biosolids.”

These amendments allow for consumer choice without harming water quality.

An update (Public Act 299 of 2010) to the Michigan Fertilizer Act prohibits the use of phosphorus fertilizers for home and commercial lawns EXCEPT if:

- A soil test indicates that phosphorus is needed for the lawn;
- The fertilizer is to be used for new turf establishment (seed or sod);
- The fertilizer is a natural fertilizer, a biosolid, a manure or a manipulated (composted) manure and the application rate is limited to 0.25 pounds of phosphorus per 1000 square feet or less (e.g., low-phosphorus application); and/or
- Fertilizer will be applied on a golf course where managers have completed certain training classes.

For additional information, see www.michigan.gov/mda-fertilizer.

Note: Compost used on the lawn is not subject to this regulation unless it is packaged as a fertilizer with nutrient or plant growth claims.