

## **Pasture and Lawn Management**

- Being “earth-friendly” when caring for your lawn and yard may also save time and money
1. If you want to try something new, think about replacing your lawn with an alternative ground cover. Some suggestions are clover, purple leaf wintercreeper, periwinkle, lily of the valley, bugleweed, birdsfoot trefoil, bearberry, wineleaf cinquefoil, and pachysandra. These alternatives provide the functions of a natural landscape and require less maintenance than exotic grasses planted in traditional lawns.
  2. Test your soil for pH. Lawns like a neutral pH for growth (pH between 6 and 7) because this condition increases the nutrient availability. If the pH is lower than 6.4, apply lime to the lawn. One lime application will last for several years.
  3. Mow the lawn to about two and a half to three and a half inches. Cutting too short results in decreased root growth. More roots mean more water is absorbed and runoff is reduced. Do not mow to the stream edge. Leave a buffer zone of at least 25 feet on each side of the stream to protect the resource.
  4. Reduce the need to water lawns. Mulching garden beds and around trees helps them to retain water. Water only on non-windy days and early in the morning or in the evening when evaporation is lowest.
  5. Leave the clippings on the lawn, as they are a source of nitrogen for the grass. If you do not want to leave the clippings, consider starting a compost pile. The grass clippings make a great addition to compost, along with kitchen vegetable waste and leaves.
  6. DO NOT DUMP CLIPPINGS INTO THE STREAM! This increases nutrient levels in the stream, which may cause algal blooms and eutrophication as mentioned earlier.

7. If you use a lawn-care service, be sure to inform them of the decisions you make regarding lawn care.

- Fertilizers

Nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) are required for plant survival. If nutrients are unavailable from the environment, fertilizers can be a helpful additive, however, fertilizers are often applied needlessly or over-abundantly.

1. Using compost to fertilize vegetable and flower gardens is a great alternative. You can easily start a compost pile using grass clippings, leaves, and kitchen vegetable waste. The decomposed mulch created from these ingredients helps to replenish the nutrient levels of soil and is completely natural.

2. Have your soil tested to determine the precise amount of nutrients needed to augment the natural levels available in the soil (contact Rutgers Extension).

3. Know the size of the area you will be fertilizing to help you determine the appropriate fertilizer amount.

4. Set your spreader to empty the correct amount of fertilizer.

5. Look for fertilizers certified as organic, and read all instructions, ingredients and safety information before beginning any application.

6. Do not spread fertilizers if rain or wind is forecasted. You want them to stay on your lawn, not go in the air or water.

- Pesticides

Although effective at getting rid of backyard pests, most pesticides are toxic to humans, animals, and aquatic organisms. Consider alternative methods of pest control, including insect predator species, that do not pose such hazards.

<b>Naturally Pest-Resistant Plants</b>	<b>Resistant to the Following Pests</b>
Mint	Ants, aphids, cabbage worms
Marigold	Beetles, nematodes, squash bug, thrips, tomato hornworm, whitefly
Rosemary	Cabbage worms, slugs
Garlic	Aphids, beetles, spider mites, borers
Onion	Beetles, mice, spider mites, borers
Nasturtium	Potato bugs, squash bugs, whitefly

- Reduce Impervious Surfaces

Instead of paving driveways and patios, use a network of pavers so that water can infiltrate the soil in between each block. Another alternative to impervious outdoor surfaces is the installation of wood decks which allow rainfall to seep into the ground below.