



Help protect Canandaigua Lake by incorporating healthy lawn care practices to protect water quality

Excess nutrients in our lake can contribute to harmful algal blooms, increased aquatic plant growth, and the degradation of our water quality. Challenge yourself to use best practices!

Start simply - how you mow matters!

Keep mower blades sharp.

- Dull blades shred the tips of grass increasing susceptibility to insects and disease. They increase the amount of fuel you need by up to 20%.

Mow grass no shorter than 3 - 4 inches.

- Taller blades shade out weeds and help to prevent their germination.
- Less fertilizer is required to keep the grass green.
- Deeper roots develop, requiring less water and reducing potential runoff.

Leave grass clippings on the lawn (grasscycling).

- Grass is made up mostly of water and nutrients including nitrogen. You can get 25% of your lawn's required nitrogen by leaving clippings in place.
- Mow leaves in fall with a mulching lawn mower so that grass can still peak through. Here is another source of nutrients and organic matter!



Capture and filter nutrients before they enter the lake with a healthy yard and shoreline.

Reduce erosion by establishing healthy, dense growth.

- Seed bare spots! Thin, patchy lawns will have an increased amount of runoff and will transfer more nutrients to the lake (even if they are not fertilized).

Plant a native vegetation buffer along shoreline.

- Native trees, shrubs, and low vegetation act as sponges for storm water runoff, catching sediment and other pollutants before reaching the lake. The root systems hold soil in place reducing erosion of the shoreline. An added bonus - buffers act as a barrier to discourage geese from walking on your property!



Keep yard waste and leaves out of the lake, streams, and storm drains.

- Yard waste adds unwanted nutrients to our waters.

Plant a rain garden.

- Divert stormwater into an attractive planting bed that will work like a natural filter to clean the water and let it percolate slowly into the surrounding soil.

Remove all pet waste - bag it and throw it in the trash.

- Did you know that 15-20% of bacteria in our waterways comes from pet waste?

Limit watering.

- Consider letting grass go dormant during summer months. The tips may brown, but the roots are still healthy. Most lawns will survive on a quarter inch of water per week.
- If you must water, do so in the morning. Cooler temperatures decrease evaporation and the heat of the day allows the grass to dry, minimizing disease.

Practice Lake-Friendly Lawn Care
To Protect Water Quality

Be mindful of the chemicals that can enter our waterways.

Misuse or overuse of fertilizers and pesticides can negatively impact our lake through runoff and may lead to unhealthy conditions for your family and pets.



Limit pesticide and herbicide use.

- Head off pests and disease by selecting native plants that are naturally disease and insect resistant.
- Tolerate some levels of weeds and pests before considering pesticides.
- Weeding is easiest when the ground is moist. Use a shovel or hand tools to remove the whole root.
- Try spot treating persistent weeds with a 10% vinegar or acetic acid solution.
- Apply corn gluten to established lawns in early spring to prevent weeds from germinating. This is also a nitrogen source, reducing the need to fertilize.



Test your soil!

- Before you fertilize, test your soil to find out what your lawn really needs. Many soil reports in the Canandaigua Lake watershed indicate no need for phosphorus. Call Cornell Cooperative Extension at (585) 394-3977 for more information on soil testing.

If you must fertilize:

- Avoid popular 4 step lawn care programs. Instead, focus on fall fertilization.
- Avoid "weed and feed" products. It can actually damage the health of lawns by harming microorganisms, beneficial insects, and earthworms that are essential to maintaining healthy soil and healthy turf.

FOLLOW THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NYS NUTRIENT RUNOFF LAW:

DO NOT:

Use lawn fertilizer that contains phosphorus unless you are establishing a new lawn, or a soil test shows that your lawn does not have enough phosphorus.

DO NOT:

Apply ANY lawn fertilizer December 1 - April 1. Don't apply fertilizer on sidewalks, driveways or other impervious surfaces. If fertilizer spills, sweep it up to prevent it from washing into drains or waterways.

DO NOT:

Apply lawn fertilizer within 20 feet of any water body unless there is at least a 10-foot buffer of shrubs, trees or other plants between the area you are fertilizing and the water.

If you use a lawn care company, here are some questions to ask:

- Do they test the soil first?
- Will they share the results with you?
- What pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides do they routinely use?
- Will they use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) if you request it? Identifying the pest/problem first and then using the safest control methods possible?
- Will they provide custom treatment based on your site conditions?
- Do they apply compost and/or compost tea? If not, do they have slow-release fertilizer options?
- If you are considering hiring a lawn care service, seek out "natural" or "organic" lawn care companies and ask the same kinds of questions.



Become a Lake-Friendly Lawn Care leader in your neighborhood

Proudly display a lawn sign and talk to your neighbors about the choices you make to help protect Canandaigua Lake.