

# Green Lawns

## Promoting environmental stewardship

### 1 Learn About Your Site or Yard

- Have soil tested to determine if nutrients/amendments are needed.
- Identify sensitive areas such as wildlife nesting places.
- Identify problem spots that can be improved with proper landscaping.

### 2 Choose the Right Plant for the Right Spot

- Select locally adapted species that require less water, fertilizer, pruning and pesticides.
- Choose the right plant for the right spot that meets the plant requirements for sun, water, and climate conditions.
- Avoid growing invasive plant species.

### 3 Build Healthy Soil and Use Fertilizers Responsibly

- If a fertilizer is needed, choose an organic or conventional product that best fits the needs of your plants and soil conditions.
- Always read and follow the label directions and never apply more than necessary.

### 4 Reduce Waste and Recycle Nutrients

- Leave grass clippings in place to provide nitrogen to the lawn.
- Make compost that can be used as a natural fertilizer and can add organic matter, microbes and earthworms to the soil.

### 5 Attract and Protect Wildlife

- Choose plants that can provide food and shelter for birds and other wildlife.
- Consider a backyard pond to provide water for wildlife.
- Add flowering annuals and perennials that can attract birds, butterflies and bees which are important pollinators.

### 6 Manage Yard Pests Responsibly

- Correctly identify any pests and the type of problems they may create.
- Change conditions that invite pest problems such as over watering, improper mowing, etc. If problems persist, choose an organic or conventional product that best fits your situation; spot treat for problems and don't use a weed and feed lawn product unless your problem is widespread.
- Always read and follow label directions.

### 7 Use Water Wisely

- Choose plants that are locally adapted or drought tolerant.
- Irrigate lawns infrequently but deeply to the depth of the root zone.
- Make sure irrigation systems are adjusted properly and repair any leaks.
- Consider drip systems to gardens, shrubs and trees.

### 8 Mow and Prune Responsibly

- Cut your lawn at the highest recommended mower setting leaving it about 3 inches long for lawns in the north and 1–2 inches in the south.
- Keep mower tuned up and blades sharp.
- Prune properly to retain a tree, shrub or plant's natural form and reduce dead or diseased material.

### 9 Prevent Landscape Pollution

- Prevent fertilizers, pesticides, yard debris or pet waste from entering water sources or waste water systems.
- Use pesticides and fertilizers only when and where needed.
- Dispose of oils, paints and other toxic materials in the proper community waste management system and not down storm drains.

### 10 Reduce Storm Water Runoff

- Slow the rate of runoff and increase soil permeability by adding organic mulch to soil and landscape plantings to intercept runoff.
- Minimize soil erosion by designing the landscape to spread water flow across the ground surface.
- Set mower height high to help prevent storm water runoff.

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For more information about environmentally friendly lawn care management, locate your local Extension office at

[www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension)

To view this publication electronically, visit

[www.ncipmc.org/greenlawns](http://www.ncipmc.org/greenlawns)

This document was adapted from the *Environmental Guidelines for Responsible Lawn Care and Landscaping* as developed by the members of the Lawns and Environment Initiative (L&E). To learn more about the development of the *Environmental Guidelines for Responsible Lawn Care and Landscaping* and the L&E Initiative go to

[www.lawnsandenvironment.org](http://www.lawnsandenvironment.org).



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