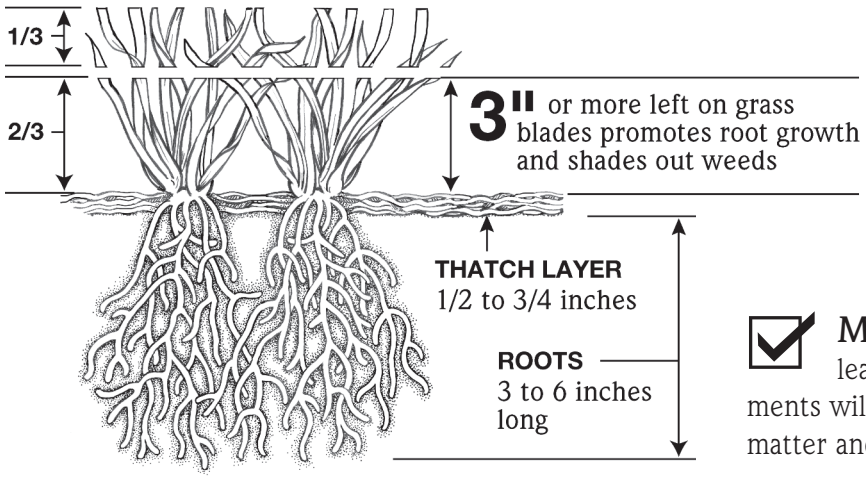
Healthy Lawn CARE TIPS 2010

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

Cut It High...Let It Lie!



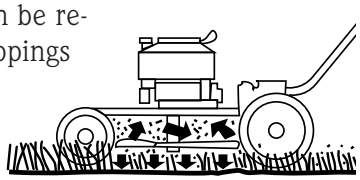
For further information...

www.socwa.org
www.turf.msu.edu/lawn

For Tips on Fertilizer and Weed Control, See Side 2.

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!



☑ **Cut High.** Leave 3 inches on the grass blade after cutting. Tall grass promotes root growth and shades out weeds.

☑ **Build Soil Organic Matter.** 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.

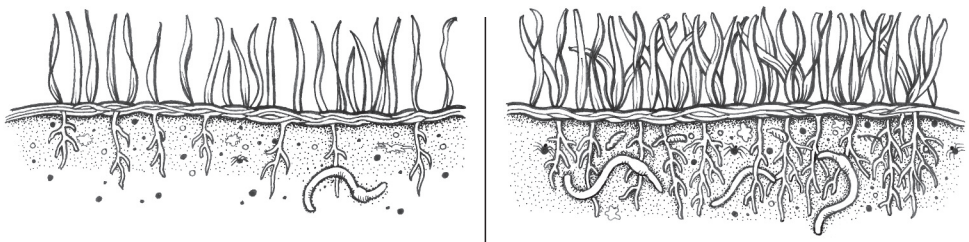
☑ **Aerate Compacted Soil.** Use a core aerator that removes finger-like plugs of grass and soil – or hire a professional service. Core aeration improves drainage and allows water and oxygen to reach the grass roots.

☑ **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 system.

☑ **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

Healthy Lawn Checklist, continued

Don't Guess…Soil Test! Test your soil for basic nutrients and organic matter, using the MSU soil nutrient test kit. During April, some local garden centers offer the MSU tests at a special price. For information, contact the Oakland County MSU Extension office: 248-858-0902. A soil test is the first step in determining how much and what type of fertilizer is needed. Over-application of fertilizers can pollute rivers and lakes – and waste money.

Select Earth-Friendly Fertilizers. Look for the green label at participating retailers. For a list of recommended fertilizers and participating retailers, see www.socwa.org.

Examples of Recommended Lawn Fertilizers *(partial list)*

Corn Gluten Products	9 - 0 - 0		
Clean Green Soy Fertilizer	7 - 0 - 0		
Espoma Organic Weed Preventer	9 - 0 - 0		
Fertrell Lawn Fertilizers	9 - 1 - 4	or	8 - 1 - 8
Ringer Lawn Restore	10- 2 - 6		
Scotts Organic Choice Lawn Food	11- 2 - 2		
Soil Science	5 - 0 - 7		

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 or weed-and-feed products if the ground is frozen.

Don't Waste Fertilizer. Measure the lawn area you intend to fertilize – but do not include garden and pavement areas in the calculation. Read the fertilizer bag label to determine the amount of fertilizer needed. Reduce the number of applications if clippings are left on the lawn or if the lawn is in partial shade.

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.

Leave a "No Fertilizer" Buffer Zone Near Lakes and Rivers. The recommended width for "no fertilizer" buffers is 20 to 25 feet or more, depending on the slope of the lawn. Instead of turfgrass, consider planting native grasses, tall wildflowers, and/or shrubs to trap pollutants and discourage Canadian geese.

Avoid Weed-and-Feed Combination Products. Combination fertilizer and weed control products often add unnecessary herbicides to the landscape. Herbicides pose a threat to animals, plants and insects beyond the intended weeds or pests. Spot-treatment or hand-digging of weeds are better approaches for the environment.

Practice IPM – Integrated Pest Management. Identify the weeds or insects of concern and select the least toxic control option. Read the label and follow directions – the label is the law. For information about healthy and environmental impacts of particularly chemicals, telephone the National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) at: 1-800-858-7378.

Do You Use A Lawn Service?

Request the Healthy Lawn Care Program for Watershed Protection

A growing number of lawn services are offering this environmental option to their customers. For a list of endorsed companies, contact the Michigan Green Industry Association at 248-646-4992 or see www.Landscape.org, section titled professionals/contractors.

This environmental lawn program includes the following components:.

- On-site consultation to address customer needs
- Earth-friendly fertilizer:
  - low or no phosphorus
  - 40% slow-release nitrogen
- Nitrogen quantities of 2, 3, or 4 pounds per 1000 square feet, applied over the growing season
- Insect and weed control options: no pesticides; spot-treat only; or one-time rescue operation
- Advice to customer on mowing and watering practices

Some companies offer organic fertilizer while others use synthetic fertilizers for this program.

Flyer prepared by SOCWA, Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority • 3910 W. Webster Rd., Royal Oak, MI 48073 • 248/288-5150
Funded through a grant from the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project.
LD-R-1305