

Tips for Healthy Lawns and Waterways into the Fall

It is hard to believe that fall is right around the corner. Did you know that if you make preparations now to help cultivate a healthy lawn for next year, you will be helping to reduce the amount of chemicals you need for your lawn in the future? It's true! Follow these water-wise tips below:

Aerate to introduce oxygen and reduce the incidence of thatch in the lawn. Both mechanical (core) and biological (liquid) methods are effective. Compacted soils can act very much like hard surfaces, such as sidewalks, by reducing the ability of water to absorb into the ground. Aerating your lawn and reducing thatch will help reduce stormwater runoff by allowing more water to soak in, while creating a healthier lawn.

Continue mowing high at 3 to 4 inches and compost grass clippings in place. Allowing grass to grow taller helps the roots to grow deeper, which increases infiltration. This reduces stormwater runoff leaving your property and entering local waterways. Also, taller grass can shade out weeds, reducing the need for weed killers which can wash into local waterways during rain events. Composting grass, by letting clippings fall to the ground (not bagging), helps to provide natural nutrients to your lawn. Also note that you should never sweep grass into storm drains, which lead directly to local streams. Make sure to sweep any grass left on driveways and sidewalks back on to the lawn.

Late summer/early fall is a great time to test your soil for nutrients and pH and add appropriate (if any) amendments. This is a good time to send your soil to a testing lab because you will have time to interpret the results and add amendments now, well before spring planting. Often this is also a "slow" time for labs, so your test won't have to stand in line. Knowing what your lawn needs will reduce the amount of chemicals needed to grow a healthy garden and lawn. This means you will have less waste and help reduce the amount of chemicals that reach our waterways.

Would you like a FREE soil testing kit and to learn other tips towards a healthy, chemical free lawn? Attend the **Soil Health through the Seasons workshop on August 19th** in Twinsburg at 6 pm. Registration is required...go to www.tinkerscreekwatershed.org.