



MINNESOTA WATER  
LET'S KEEP IT CLEAN

**Fall Lawn Care Tip Sheet**  
**Metro Watershed Partners**  
*Minnesota Water: Let's Keep It Clean*

Don't leave lawn care 'til spring!

Fall is the best time of year to fertilize your lawn and control weeds. In fact, healthy lawns help area lakes and streams. Thick grass prevents soil erosion and absorbs rainwater. By soaking up rainwater, lawns decrease the amount of stormwater runoff funneling pollutants into lakes and streams.

**Here's how to keep your lawn healthy in the fall:**

- **Mow.** Mow your grass at a height of two to three inches.
- **Water.** Even though it is cooler in the fall, lawns still need regular watering to maintain plant health and survive winter conditions. Water until the ground begins to freeze.
- **Fertilize.** Fall is the best time of year to fertilize your lawn. Fertilizer provides grass with nutrients for spring growth. Water for one to two hours after fertilizer application.
- **New law.** Follow Minnesota's new lawn fertilizer phosphorus law.
- **Soil test.** Find out what is needed: Test the soil. A soil test is a good idea, especially when concerned that a lawn may need phosphorus.
- **Control weeds.** September is the best time of year to treat dandelions, plantain, clover and creeping charley. Limited numbers of weeds should be removed by hand or spot-treated with herbicide.
- **Sweep-up.** Sweep up and reuse lawn care products that fall on streets, sidewalks and driveways.

**Here's how to recycle your leaves:**

- **Compost.** Composting recycles nutrients and helps keep leaves out of streets and storm sewers.
- **Mulch.** You can use leaves, whole or shredded by a power mower, as winter or spring mulch.
- **Mow.** If you have less than two inches of leaves covering your lawn, you can leave them in place and make several passes over them with a power mower. By shredding them into a fine, thin layer, you will provide your grass with valuable nutrients and end up with a lawn that looks like it was just raked. Gradually reduce mowing height to two inches to prevent winter turf damage.
- **Bag.** Rake and bag your leaves for pickup by city crews. Some towns compost bagged leaves.

*For additional tips about how to protect Minnesota's waterways at home visit the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Web site at [www.mda.state.mn.us](http://www.mda.state.mn.us) and click on the Water and Land section's Lawn Care and Water Quality pages.*

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