

# LAWNSMART TIPS FOR RESIDENTS

(Care for your lawn in a smart and environmentally responsible way)

**Water wisely.** The best way to care for your lawn is to provide it with just the right amount of water. The general rule is that lawns require an inch of water per week (depending on weather conditions). Experts say the best way to accomplish this is to provide your lawn with a half-inch of water twice a week. To make it easy, use the “tuna fish can” method. Start with a 1” deep tuna fish can and water your lawn long enough to fill half of it. Then water your lawn twice a week for that amount of time.

**Mow smart.** Grass types and environmental conditions vary so set your mower to the setting that is best for the kind of grass on your lawn. A professional lawn care company or a lawn and garden store can help you determine the right height setting for your mower. In general, high level settings of 3” are recommended. Mowing at the right height will help create a healthy and drought-resistant lawn.

**Proper disposal.** Grass clippings are allies in the effort to have a beautiful and environmentally responsible lawn. Leaving your grass clippings on your lawn will allow them to decompose and recycle the nutrients they contain back into your lawn. Homeowners will also save money through less gasoline use, less fertilizer and pesticide use, and a reduced need to purchase lawn waste bags. Leaves, on the other hand, can create problems for lawns if left in place too long or if allowed to enter local waterways and environmentally sensitive areas. Keep raking leaves throughout the autumn to prevent leaf litter build up which can suffocate your lawn or find its way into waterways and environmentally sensitive areas.

**Control storm water runoff.** Rain barrels and rain gardens have long been recognized as great tools to help control storm water runoff and provide a great source of water for lawn and garden irrigation. The cost of rain barrels is typically affordable while rain gardens featuring native plants (that are often drought-resistant) can provide a visually pleasing complement to well-maintained lawns.

**Smart landscaping.** Topography, soil conditions, and climate conditions vary across the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway region. A professional landscape company or lawn and garden store can recommend less-thirsty plants or salt-resistant plants for locations near roadways in winter months that can complement healthy, properly-maintained lawn grasses.

**Support pollinator health.** In 2015, a White House press release regarding the Pollinator Health Task Force urged the public to create new food forage areas on their property as a way of helping pollinators. Think about adding a pollinator garden on your property as a way of creating more food and more places for pollinators to forage. In addition, homeowners should avoid applying insecticides when lawns are flowering as these products can end up in nectar. Regular mowing of lawns during the spring will remove flowering weeds that may attract pollinators to your lawn.

**Apply products correctly.** It is important to read and follow lawn care product labels as they provide direction and recommendations on their proper use. Following the label is the most important step to assure the responsible use of fertilizers and pesticides. The label is not only the law, it also provides guidance on how much time should pass before pets or people walk or play on the lawn. Care should be taken to keep lawn care products off of hard surfaces such as driveways and sidewalks. Application should also be avoided in windy conditions to eliminate drift to off-target surfaces.

**Hire a licensed, professional lawn care company.** The best way to make sure your lawn and landscape is properly cared for is to hire a licensed, professional lawn care company. Professionals have the training and equipment necessary to assure that only approved products are applied at the right time, in the right manner, and – most importantly – in the right amount. Lawn care professionals can also spot emerging problems as well as suggest ways to enhance your home’s overall landscape.



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