

# WHY IS YARD WASTE AND GRASS CLIPPINGS SO BAD?



Merritts Mill Pond  
Photo by Jess Van Dyke  
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As grass clippings and yard waste breaks down, it releases phosphorus and nitrogen to the water which leads to excessive algae growth.



These algae blooms block out sunlight and reduce oxygen levels in water, which can lead to fish kills.



Information courtesy of:  
[www.tcpwq.org](http://www.tcpwq.org)



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Information developed  
by: [www.siswac.org](http://www.siswac.org)

Last updated October 2015



# YARD WASTE AND GRASS CLIPPINGS



The Grass isn't always greener on the other side...of the Storm Drain!

Yard debris, like leaves, grass clippings, and other organic plant material are a significant source of stormwater pollution.



## HOW CAN YOU HELP?



Leave grass clippings on your lawn where they act as a natural fertilizer. Or bag them for easy disposal.



Don't forget to sweep up! Grass clippings and leaves will wash into a storm drain during the next rain, where they can clog culverts, storm drains, and pipes, causing flooding.



### How can you protect water quality while keeping your yard maintained?

- ✓ Mow your lawn often so you only remove the top 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of grass blades. Taller grass has deeper roots which prevents soil loss and helps water infiltrate.
- ✓ Leave grass clippings on the lawn or compost them. **Intentionally blowing or placing lawn waste in the street is illegal and you could receive a citation or fine.**
- ✓ Fertilize only when necessary, and don't do it if it might rain within two days.
  - ✓ Use slow-release Nitrogen fertilizer which doesn't need to be applied as often.
  - ✓ In the fall, bag your leaves for municipal collection. If your community picks them up from the street, don't place them in the gutter if it's going to rain within two days.
    - ✓ Clean up after your pets!
- ✓ Never hose grease, oil, or fluid from chemicals or spills into a storm drain! Use an absorbent material and sweep it up.
  - ✓ Plant a raingarden!



**CUT IT HIGH**  
**and let it lie**



Start a compost pile and turn yard waste into rich soil for your indoor and outdoor plants.



Taller grass is more drought tolerant and has deeper roots. Keep grass at least 3" high and mow often so you only remove the top 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of grass blades.

If you see someone dumping yard waste and grass clippings in the storm drain, call your local Stormwater Hotline.