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## Best Lawn Care Practices

Lake Champlain Sea Grant

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# Best Lawn Care Practices



## WHY DO WE CARE?

Grass that is cut to less than 3" in height and where clippings are not left to decompose will generally have shorter and less developed root systems, limiting the amount of water the soil can absorb or hold. This increases runoff and nutrient transport to local waterways and the chance for subsequent cyanobacteria blooms. Grass cut short is also less likely to provide habitat for insects and pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and beetles. In turn, this limits food available to birds that rely upon insects to eat and feed their young.

In addition, applying fertilizers, especially without the use of a soil test, can result in runoff of nutrients to local waterways and reduce oxygen levels in water.

Pesticide application has been suggested to increase the risk of cancer in dogs, and chemicals from pesticides that reach waterways can affect hatching and survival rates of aquatic organisms and/or cause lesions and fin erosion on fish.

Long Grass + Long Roots + Healthy Soil = Clean Water



Image: Lawntolake.org



Consider "mow where you go" lawncare practice

## WHAT IS BURLINGTON DOING?

- Burlington supports the Raise-the-Blade campaign to improve soil health and reduce runoff from lawns! The Parks department has designated several previously mowed grass areas in the parks as no- or low-mow areas.
- Burlington is a Bee City USA, a program of the Xerces Society. The City has committed to conserving and planting native pollinator species and reducing the use of pesticides,

## ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO KEEP WATER CLEAN:

- Raise the blade on your lawnmower to at least 3 inches and allow clippings to decompose on the lawn where they will act as a natural fertilizer. This will increase the water-holding capacity of the soil and allow the grass to retain more nutrients. As it grows denser it will crowd out weeds and reduce the need to use chemical weed control.
- Learn more about lawncare best practices at [lawntolake.org](http://lawntolake.org).
- Get your soil tested to inform fertilizer application. Test results will show what nutrients your lawn has plenty of, as well as what it needs more of. To learn how to test your soil, visit <https://go.uvm.edu/vtsoiltest>.
- If your lawn needs fertilizer, consider using a slow-release formula in the fall.
- Use non-carcinogenic alternatives such as citronella oil, clover oil, peppermint, and rosemary in place of more dangerous pesticides.
- Consider “Mowing Where You Go” to allow grass to grow long in some areas of your yard for better root development and habitat.
- Replace unused areas of lawn with native perennials.

Contact us: [blue@uvm.edu](mailto:blue@uvm.edu)

Find out what you can do  
to be more **BLUE**



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**BLUE BTV is a residential green stormwater infrastructure incentive program in Burlington, VT. BLUE BTV educates and collaborates with residents to identify opportunities for stormwater mitigation, affect behavioral changes, and establish stewardship principles to protect our waters from cyanobacteria blooms.**