



CNY STORMWATER COALITION

Gardens and Gutters

A Central New Yorker's Guide to Managing Stormwater Runoff

Volume 9 Issue 1

May 2021

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Feel-Good Yard and Garden Guidelines

Spring is here! As you develop landscaping plans, remember that you can protect water resources by making small changes in how you care for your garden and yard. The practices and tips found in this newsletter will help set the stage for a beautiful yard, a healthy environment, and improved local water quality protection.

Take care when applying herbicides and fertilizers. Remember, the use of phosphorus fertilizer is prohibited for most uses in NYS. Our soils contain naturally high levels of phosphorus, so additional applications are usually unnecessary. If you do need to apply fertilizer or herbicides, read the labels carefully and always use as directed. Applications to lawns and gardens at the wrong rate or during storm events can cause these products to run off into streams and lakes. Pesticides and fertilizers that make their way into our drinking water or recreational areas can cause health hazards for adults and children, pets and aquatic life.

Consider the alternatives. Chemical fertilizers and lawn treatments interfere with natural photosynthesis in plants. Soils naturally contain millions of microbes that help to keep plants healthy. Chemical pesticides destroy the microbial populations and reduce soil vitality.

Safe and effective alternatives exist for many of the chemical pesticides and fertilizers that are commonly used on lawns and gardens.

According to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, switching to chemical-free lawn care

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Source: <http://gardenfuzzgarden.com/2014/02/10/>

Feel-Good Yard and Garden Guidelines, *continued*

treatment promotes deep root systems, natural photosynthesis, and stronger growth rates.

Water with care. Use a broom to sweep your driveway or sidewalk instead of using a hose. The runoff from a hose could flow into nearby storm drains and end up in local lakes, streams, and wetlands. This adds unwanted nutrients and other pollutants to the water, depletes oxygen levels, and promotes algae growth. When irrigating your lawn and garden, don't allow water to flow onto paved surfaces or into nearby storm drains. The best time to water is in the early morning or late in the afternoon.

Compost your yard waste. Two to three inches of bark chips or leaf mulch placed around your plants and trees will add valuable nutrients to the soil and will reduce weed growth in plant beds. However, don't mound the mulch too close to the base of the tree trunks. Tree roots may grow in the mulched area which can eventually girdle and kill the tree.

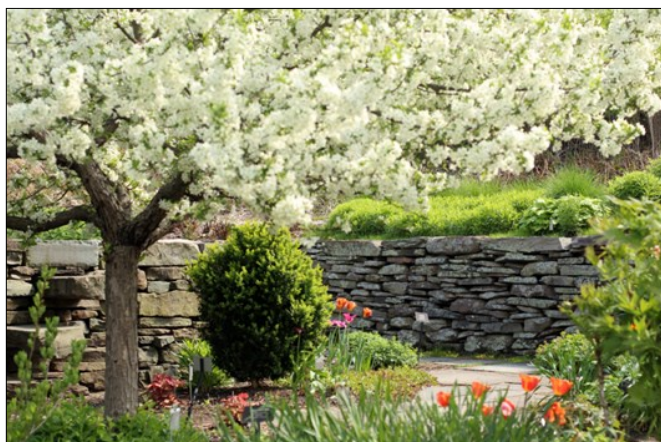
Reduce weed growth. Apply corn gluten (available at most garden stores) to lawns and gardens in the early spring to reduce weed growth. This practice won't kill the weeds but it will prevent new ones from germinating. It is also a natural source of nitrogen. A good way to manage weeds that grow between cracks along walkways and in stony areas is to apply a high acid spray such as vinegar or pour boiling water over the unwanted plants. Repeat applications may be needed to increase effectiveness.

Smart Plant Selections Can Reduce Pesticide Use
Head off pest and disease problems by choosing plants that have built-in disease and insect resistance. Choose climate-adapted and disease-

resistant native species or non-invasive plants whenever possible. Cool season grasses such as tall and fine fescues, kentucky bluegrass, and perennial rye grass are appropriate for the Northeast. Choose fescues for shadier areas. Pick grass seed mixes with more bluegrass for areas that are sunny and will receive more use.

Roses are susceptible to black spot, but there are some resistant varieties. Try the hardy "landscape roses" which offer beautiful flowers, excellent cold-hardiness, and are disease resistant.

Reduce your yard size. You can also reduce stormwater runoff, save money, and have clearer air by reducing the area of your property that you mow. According to the NYSDEC, operating a gas-powered lawn mower for an hour emits the same amount of pollution as a 20-mile car trip and produces 15 pounds of air pollution in an hour. Electric mowers are cleaner and better for the environment. Taller grasses and less mowing disturbances will also minimize the need for pesticides while providing cover for wildlife and pollinating insects such as fireflies.



Source: www.proflowers.com/blog/

Spring Cleaning Tips to Protect Water Resources



Source: <http://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/hw>

This is the perfect time of year for spring cleaning projects in your garden shed, lawn, basement, and garage. As you tackle these chores, recycle your waste whenever possible. Placing hazardous waste from your home and yard such as un-used pesticides, fertilizer, paint, old batteries, and out-of-date electronics into your trash is illegal and harmful for the environment. Why should we care? Because when these items end up in landfills, they can leach toxic material into the air, soil, and water which creates health hazards for people and wildlife. 256 million tons of hazardous waste is produced every year in the United State. Now is the perfect time to become smarter about spring cleaning.

Whether you drop off your waste at a transfer station or have it collected by a professional hauler, recycling your household and yard items makes our world a little better each day. Be creative with the re-use of garden products to avoid trips to the land fill. Recycle unused plastic flower pots, consider using broken clay pots for drainage, and donate your old tools and equipment to other gardeners.

The OCRRA website (OCRRA.org) has helpful guidance on how to deal with garden waste and they also provide free recycling supplies for homes and businesses in Onondaga County.

Certified Compost from OCRRA

Are you planning to start a new garden or expand an existing one this spring? If so, the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (OCRRA) has two types of Certified Compost ($\frac{1}{4}$ " and $\frac{1}{2}$ " screened) that offer many benefits:

- Adds nutrients and organic matter to the soil for improved plant growth
- Controls stormwater runoff
- Helps retain moisture so you don't need to water as frequently
- Naturally suppresses plant diseases so your garden stays healthy
- Reduces the need for chemicals and pesticides so you keep pollutants out of water resources

OCRRA's Certified Composts are made from a blend of local yard waste and food waste, and are registered as 'Pride of NY' products. OCRRA's Certified Composts are tested to meet the US Composting Council's Seal of Testing Assurance standards. This means you always get safe, consistent, weed and seed free compost to nurture your soils and plants. For additional information and locations where you can purchase mulch by the cubic yard or by the bag, visit OCRRA.ORG/

A Few Good Reasons To Go Native

Smart landscaping decisions such as plant selection and mulching can provide an attractive yard and garden while creating benefits for the environment, our water supply and public health. Deciding to use native plants is a good place to start because they are naturally adapted to the local climate and soil conditions in Central New York. The use of native plants provides these additional gardening advantages:

Water Conservation

Once established, most native plants require less water and they often rely on normal rainfall rates in Central New York.

Low Maintenance

Low maintenance landscaping practices are an added benefit when using native plants because they are already adapted to the local environment. Native plants require little or no fertilizer, little to no pesticides, less pruning, and less of your time.

Minimal Pesticide Use

Native plants have developed their own defenses against many pests and diseases. Since most pesticides kill indiscriminately, beneficial insects become secondary targets in the fight against pests. Reducing or eliminating pesticide use lets natural pest control take over and keeps garden toxins out of local streams and lakes.

Healthy Ecosystem

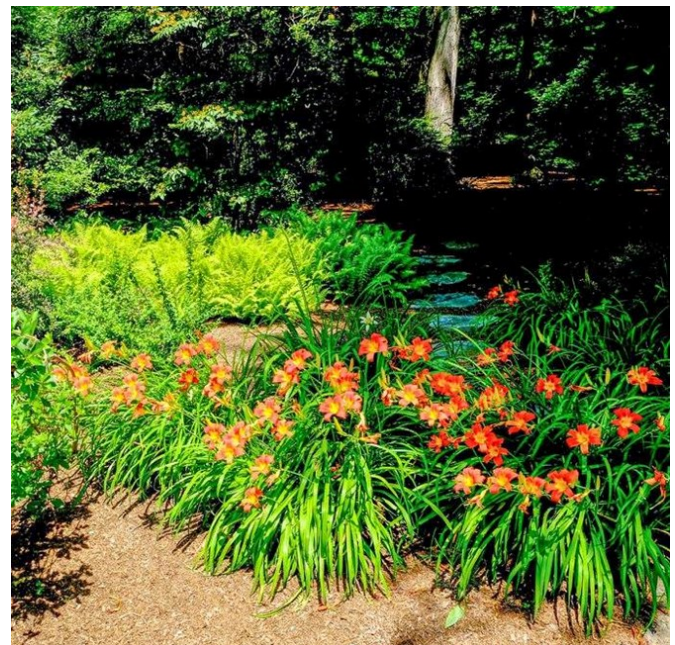
Native plants, birds, insects, and wildlife work together to create a well-balanced ecosystem. Research shows that native wildlife prefers native plants.

Additional information about native plants is available at the [NYS DEC's Sustainable Landscaping website](http://www.dec.ny.gov/landscaping). Check out their [Native Plants for Gardening and Landscaping Fact Sheet](#) for examples of native trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, and flowers that work well in home gardens and landscaping.

This article was adapted from <http://www.dec.ny.gov/>



Source: <http://www.ecolandscaping.org>



Source: <http://www.greenjaylandscaping.com>

Practical Tips for Healthy Lawns

Central New Yorkers are encouraged to practice sustainable lawn care by going phosphorus free, using native plants, and reducing fertilizer use. Simple measures to maintain a healthy lawn will reduce problems with drought, diseases, undesirable weed growth, and pest infestations.

Promote a healthy lawn by following the correct mowing and watering practices. Longer grass (2.5 inches or higher) encourages deeper, healthier root system which is an advantage during dry periods. Save time and effort and improve soil health by leaving the grass clippings and composted leaves on the lawn.

It's normal for lawns to go dormant during the hottest days of summer. They will green-up again easily as conditions change. If you must, water the lawn once a week. Lawns only need about an inch of water per week. Use the sprinkler early in the morning or late in the afternoon to conserve water.

Improve lawn health by using natural materials. Applying a half inch of finished compost provides nitrogen, other trace nutrients, and organic matter to the soil. According to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, you will meet 50% of your lawn's nitrogen requirements by leaving grass clippings on the lawn. Apply the other 50% in the fall by shredding leaves using a mulching lawn mower and leaving them on the lawn. More serious nitrogen deficiencies can be corrected with a slow-release, organic source of nitrogen such as

blood meal, cottonseed meal, or fish meal. You'll see better results when nutrients are applied when the soil temperatures are above 65 degrees.

If you must use commercially prepared fertilizer, use only phosphorus-free fertilizers. In New York State, most lawns do not need additional phosphorus to thrive. When excess amounts are applied to lawns, the phosphorus (and the cost of the product) washes down the nearest storm drain and into our surface waters.

Remember—according to NYS law:

- Do not apply any fertilizer containing nitrogen, potassium, or phosphorous between December 1 and April 1
- Do not apply fertilizer within 20 feet of any surface water unless there is a vegetative buffer of at least 10 feet
- Do not broadcast fertilizer onto sidewalks and roads where it can run-off into storm drains or nearby waterways



Source: <http://abundancenc.org/grassroots-sustenance/>

Sustainable Lawn Care to Protect Waterbodies



Photo source: A. Saltman

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner, Basil Seggos, urges residents to 'look for the zero' and buy phosphorous-free fertilizer this spring. By eliminating phosphorus and reducing pesticide use on lawns, New Yorkers can improve water quality. New York's nutrient runoff law prohibits the use of phosphorus lawn fertilizers unless a new lawn is being established or a soil test shows that the lawn does not have enough phosphorus. Generally, only newly established lawns or those with poor soil need phosphorus. Phosphorus applied to lawns that don't need it can cause water pollution. Regardless of the location, excess phosphorus from lawns can wash off and pollute lakes and streams, harming fish and ruining boating and swimming.

Consumers should review bag labels for phosphorus content when shopping for fertilizer. Fertilizer labels have three bold numbers. The number in the middle is the percentage of phosphorus in the product, such as: 22-0-15. The state's law requires retailers to display phosphorus fertilizer separately from phosphorus-free fertilizer. Retailers are also required to post signs notifying customers of the terms of the law.



Photo source: Think Blue Maine

For more information, visit the [NYS DEC's Lawn Fertilizer web page](#) or check out this amusing and informative 30 second video on the DEC's You Tube channel: "[Look for Zero Phosphorus Lawn Fertilizer](#)" that shows how phosphorus and other chemicals can run off lawns and enter our waterways.

The nutrient runoff law does not affect agricultural fertilizer or fertilizer for gardens.

Creating a Healthy Yard

The following was originally published by the Town of Boylston, MA in a brochure titled "*Greenscapes—Creating a Healthy Yard*". The brochure is part of a larger stormwater education program funded by a s319 grant from the MA Department of Environmental Protection. To learn more about creating a beautiful, eco-friendly yard, go to www.greenscapes.org

Get your lawn off drugs! Organic is the healthy way to go! Commercial fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides are like fast food - they fill you up and taste good, but hurt your health. That's the same with synthetic lawn care products, which rob the soil of vital nutrients and microbes, requiring more and more applications of fertilizers and chemicals to compensate.

Healthy soils make healthy grass... it's as simple as that! The concept of going organic is all about creating healthy soils that have the right nutrients and ph, which will encourage robust grass growth through long, strong roots. FACT: Grass will outcompete weeds if given the right soil conditions!

Going organic? Here's How:

1. Go cold turkey - Don't make a slow transition. Organic is about creating healthy soil to nurture plant growth - synthetic is about stimulating plant growth above ground. They are not compatible.
2. Get your soil tested -This is imperative, because you must know your soil's deficiencies, including ph levels to provide the right soil conditions for healthy root growth.
3. Add the soil amendments that the test results suggest.
4. Top dress with compost- Spread 1/2" of compost on your lawn. Compost provides organic matter, teeming with microbes that will make the soil more porous and nutrient-rich.

5. Overseed in the spring and the fall. Mowing does not let grasses form the seed heads necessary for them to self-sow, which is why overseeding is important. When overseeding, use a blend of fescues, which grow deep roots and are very drought tolerant.
6. Spray compost tea on your lawn once a month during the growing season. You can make your own or you can buy liquid or dehydrated compost tea at many nurseries.
7. Apply organic fertilizer in the fall. Organic fertilizer is much coarser and less soluble than synthetic fertilizer, so it tends to stay put. The end result - a beautiful, healthy yard.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the governing body which upholds the integrity of the organic program throughout the United States. According to the USDA, organic is a labeling term that indicates that the food or other agricultural product has been produced through approved methods. There are currently no standards for organic turf management that a homeowner or turf manager could follow for a lawn area to be considered certified organic.

The Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) provides voluntary accreditation for professionals in Organic Land Care. NOFA has developed and teaches to their own standards. After passing a competency exam, applicants are certified as organic land care professionals. The training includes organic turf management. More information and a list of professionals in your area can be found at NOFA Organic Land Care.

CNY STORMWATER COALITION



The CNY Stormwater Coalition was formalized in 2011 in order to establish a regional approach for stormwater management and water resource protection. The Coalition is made up of 29 local governments and the NYS

Fairgrounds. Each member operates a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). Through the Coalition, members are working together to meet regulatory requirements while improving water quality.

CNY STORMWATER COALITION MEMBERS

Baldwinsville Village	Manlius Village
Camillus Town	Marcellus Town
Camillus Village	Marcellus Village
Central Square Village	Minoa Village
Cicero Town	North Syracuse Village
Clay Town	Onondaga County
DeWitt Town	Onondaga Town
East Syracuse Village	Phoenix Village
Fayetteville Village	Pompey Town
Geddes Town	Salina Town
Hastings Town	Solvay Village
LaFayette Town	Sullivan Town
Liverpool Village	Syracuse City
Lysander Town	Van Buren Town
Manlius Town	NYS Fairgrounds

The CNY Stormwater Coalition meets quarterly throughout the year. All meetings are open to the public. Check the Coalition's website for the times, dates, and additional meeting details.

The CNY Stormwater Coalition is staffed and coordinated by the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board. For additional information, visit the CNY Stormwater website www.cnyrpd.org/stormwater



Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board

Only Rain Belongs in the Drain

As you start a spring cleanup in your yard, it's important to remember that storm drains are not garbage disposals. Substances including leaves, yard waste, and other debris should be disposed of properly, and not released into neighborhood drains. Do your part to ensure that the only thing flowing into the storm drains are rain and snow/ice melt.

In Onondaga County, if you see or suspect that someone has poured contaminants such as herbicides, fertilizers, household or commercial yard products, cleaners, paint, motor oil or anything other than stormwater into a storm drain, report it to the Onondaga County Stormwater Pollution hotline at 315-435-3157. The hotline is staffed 24-hours a day, seven days a week by the Onondaga County Office of Water Environment Protection.



Photo source: K. Bertuch

