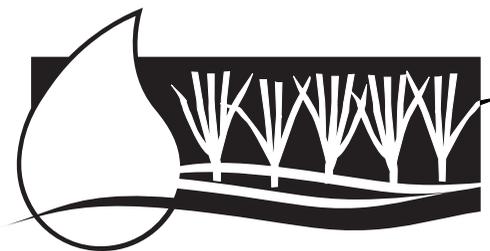


# *Healthy Lawn Care Program For Environmental Protection*

## **A Guide To Selecting A Lawn Service** *Questions To Ask*

*Brochure prepared by SOCWA  
(Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority)  
in cooperation with the  
Wayne County Department of Environment and the  
Michigan Green Industry Association  
Updated – February 2005*



### **WHY BE CONCERNED?**

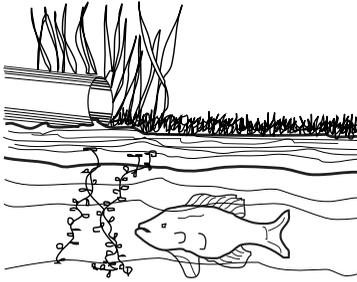
Rain and melting snow carry small amounts of oil, grease, soil, debris, and other pollutants to rivers, lakes, and wetlands. Lawn fertilizer and pesticides are among the pollutants that have been found in storm water runoff.

Lawn service providers throughout Southeast Michigan are being asked to minimize fertilizers and pesticides – but chemical use reduction depends on customer interest. This brochure will help local residents find lawn care services that meet their own goals – and protect water quality.



**Program recommended by:** SOCWA, Wayne County Department of Environment, Friends of the Rouge, Clinton River Watershed Council, Huron River Watershed Council, Oakland County Drain Commissioner's Office, Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner's Office, and Rouge River municipalities.





## COMBINING HOMEOWNER GOALS WITH WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

A “one size fits all” approach to lawn care can result in unnecessary quantities of fertilizer and herbicides. The healthy lawn care program is an environmentally-friendly alternative to standard practice.

### Questions To Ask Yourself

- 1. What are your goals?** Would you like to protect water quality? Are you concerned about exposure to lawn pesticides?
- 2. Are you interested in a “rescue operation” for your lawn** to remove excessive weeds and/or to rejuvenate lawn grasses and soils – before starting a healthy lawn program?
- 3. Are a few weeds in your lawn acceptable?** Are you willing to dig a few weeds by hand?
- 4. Are you willing to follow recommended mowing practices?** Tall grass (2 1/2" - 3" after cutting) shades out many weeds.
- 5. Are you interested in low-maintenance ground covers in shady areas as a substitute for grass?**

### Questions To Ask Lawn Care Services

- Do you offer an on-site consultation?
- Do you provide a program tailored to my lawn and goals?
- Do you obtain a soil test before recommending a fertilizer program?
- Do you offer natural organic and/or slow-release nitrogen fertilizer options?
- Do you offer a low-phosphorus or zero-phosphorus fertilizer option?
- Do you offer reduced pesticide or zero-pesticide options?
- Do you wait until mid-April before fertilizing?
- Do you clean up granules from sidewalks?

### SERVICE AGREEMENT REMINDER

*When you receive the proposed service agreement (signed by the company's representative), review it carefully. The service agreement should set forth the approximate schedule and frequency of services, all fees, and other pertinent product information. Without a written proposal, it is easy to misunderstand what the lawn service is offering.*



# HEALTHY LAWN CARE PROGRAM FOR WATERSHED PROTECTION

Lawn care service providers in Southeast Michigan have worked cooperatively with public agencies and education groups over the past two years to develop a river-friendly lawn care program.

*The basic components of the program are as follows:*

- **An initial on-site consultation** before recommending fertilizer and/or pesticides.
- **Soil nutrient tests** offered to all new customers.
- **Slow-release nitrogen fertilizer.** Some companies offer natural organic fertilizers while others offer synthetic fertilizers with 50% or more slow-release or controlled-release nitrogen, such as water-insoluble nitrogen (W.I.N.)
- **Low-phosphorus or no-phosphorus fertilizer for most circumstances.** Low-phosphorus fertilizers have a nitrogen-to-phosphorus ratio of 5 to 1 or greater. Exceptions to the low-phosphorus recommendation are (1) new lawns (seed or sod); and (2) additional phosphorus as justified by soil nutrient test results.
- **Fertilizer quantities** of either 2, 3 or 4 pounds of nitrogen applied on the lawn over the growing season – depending on the type of turf, and other site considerations.
- **Pesticide options,** depending on the goals and views of the customer. Examples of pesticides are herbicides (weed control) and insecticides (insect control). Options which may be offered include:
  - Zero pesticide program
  - Spot-treatment for weeds (NOT weed-and-feed)
  - One-time “rescue operation” for weed control
- **Advice to the customer** on maintenance practices such as mowing and watering.



**SINCE YOU ARE THE CUSTOMER,  
YOU CAN AND SHOULD CHOOSE THE  
SERVICES YOU WISH FOR YOUR LAWN.**

- *Can fertilizer quantities and numbers of applications be reduced?*
- *What problems are observed in the lawn that require any pesticides?*

**SHOW THIS BROCHURE TO YOUR  
LAWN SERVICE AND ASK THEM  
TO FOLLOW THESE PRACTICES.**

**LAWN SERVICES ARE ENCOURAGED  
TO APPLY FOR ENDORSEMENT UNDER  
THE HEALTHY LAWN PROGRAM.**

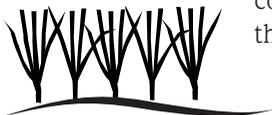
*Application packages are available  
from the Michigan Green Industry  
Association at 248-646-4992.*

# IF YOU HAVE DECIDED TO CONTRACT FOR PESTICIDE APPLICATION SERVICE...



## *Questions To Ask*

- **Is the company licensed?** The Michigan Department of Agriculture must license any company that applies pesticide. Ask for the license number. Companies without license information should not be hired.
- **What is the target pest(s) and the management procedure to be used?** Michigan law (Regulation 637) specifies that written information about the pesticide application must be provided to the customer no later than the time of the application. Required information includes: (1) the name, address & telephone number of the firm providing the service; (2) full name of the applicator; (3) a general description of the target pest(s) to be controlled; (4) a list of the pesticides applied; (5) the time and date of the application; and (6) any precautionary warnings. Will the company be providing this information?



## *Questions about landscaping companies? Call...*

- **Better Business Bureau**, 248-644-9100
- **Michigan Consumer Protection Office**, Office of the Attorney General, Lansing, MI, 517-373-1140
- **Michigan Department of Agriculture**, Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division, Southeast Michigan, 248-356-1701
- **Michigan Green Industry Association**, 248-646-4992

## *Questions about environmental and health effects of specific chemicals?*

- **Call National Pesticide Information Center**; 1-800-858-7378. Free telephone consultation 7 days a week, or on the web at <http://ace.orst.edu/info/nptn>

*Funded through a grant from the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Program.*

### HEALTHY LAWN CARE PROGRAM PARTICIPATING LAWN CARE COMPANIES

#### **ATWOOD LAWN CARE, INC.**

Sterling Heights, Michigan  
Ask for: Natural Choice Program  
586-939-3636  
[www.atwoodlawncare.com](http://www.atwoodlawncare.com)

#### **BERNS LANDSCAPING SERVICES, INC.**

Warren, Michigan  
Ask for: Organic Approach Programs  
586-756-1145  
[www.bernslandscape.com](http://www.bernslandscape.com)

#### **D & G NATURE'S WAY, INC.**

South Lyon, Michigan  
248-437-3759

#### **LAND WORKS LANDSCAPES, INC.**

West Bloomfield, Michigan  
248-669-3060

#### **LAWN WORLD, INC.**

248-684-5225  
[www.lawnworldinc.com](http://www.lawnworldinc.com)

#### **MIKE'S TREE SURGEONS, INC.**

Troy, Michigan  
Ask for: Healthy Lawn Option  
248-588-0202  
[www.miketree.com](http://www.miketree.com)

For additional companies, contact  
The Michigan Green Industry Association  
248-646-4992