



2. A NATURAL LAWN

Reducing Your Use of Weed Killers and Fertilizers on Your Lawn

WHY ACT?

If you have a lawn, you may be using weed killers and fertilizers to keep it green and weed-free. Unfortunately, toxic chemicals in weed killers and fertilizers often wash off your lawn into local streams and ground water, eventually polluting our waterways and their tributaries. Fertilizer encourages algae growth, and when the algae die and decompose, the oxygen in the water is reduced. Pesticides, even in very small amounts, can harm or kill aquatic life. Exposure to chemicals has also been linked to human health problems. This water action will show you how to create a natural lawn and help protect the health of your family, wildlife, and our local resources.

WATER ACTION

- Get your soil tested and apply fertilizers only at the appropriate time in the right amounts.
- If you fertilize at all, use organic compost instead of chemical fertilizers. Fertilizers act as pollutants once they enter our waterways. You can either create your own compost, or purchase it from a garden supply center.
- Accept a few weeds, like clover, which can coexist nicely with your lawn. Hand pull the ugly ones before they seed, and leave the others alone.
- Overseed thin areas in the spring and fall to crowd out weeds. Just rake to expose the soil, spread the seed, and cover with 1/4 inch of compost or soil.

Note: To lessen the burden of maintaining a lawn and the toll it takes on the water supply and the pollutants going into the watershed, consider replacing all or part of your lawn with native trees, shrubs, ferns, wildflowers, and groundcover (see *Yard Makeover*, Action 12, pg. 25).

MATERIALS

Natural compost, soil, seeds, rake, and weed pulling tools

TIME

A couple of hours to pull weeds and fertilize with compost

BENEFITS

By “greening” your lawn, you prevent the pollution from weed killers and fertilizers from flowing into streams and rivers while making your lawn a natural place for you, your family and neighbors to enjoy.

