

WaterWatch



Grass Clippings

Warmer months are often marked hot summer days, barbecues, vacations and yard work. The quest for a perfect lawn can lead to several water quality problems. Overuse of fertilizers and pesticides can introduce toxins into surface waters. Overwatering can be a major obstacle to water conservation. This article, however, will feature what to do about grass clippings.

Too many nutrients

Nutrients are not just the building blocks of life; they can become a pollutant if there are too much of them in a water body. Lakes and rivers that have too much nitrogen and/or phosphorous can go through a process called eutrophication. Fertilizers, grass clippings, and animal wastes from agriculture and residential activities wash into storm drains, lakes and rivers when it rains. Because of excess nutrients, algae in the rivers and lakes bloom



beyond the water body's normal capacity to support algae. When the algae use up all the excess nutrients, they die off and decompose. The process of decomposition uses up dissolved oxygen in the water. This leaves little oxygen available for fish. When enough of the oxygen is used up, many of the fish die.

Clippings contain nutrients

Grass clippings are about 85% water and 5% nitrogen. That's enough nutrients to provide up to 30% of your fertilizing needs if you leave the clippings on your lawn.



Although plant material accumulates naturally, excess clippings can lead to the nutrient build-up that causes eutrophication.

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Household Hazardous Waste: Oil and Antifreeze

Fluids that you use in your car can be very hazardous to health. Used oil contains heavy metals and hydrocarbons and can contaminate large quantities of water. Antifreeze is even more potentially harmful. The borates, ethylene glycol and sodium nitrate can be fatal. Swallowing just three ounces can kill an adult. In addition, animals are attracted to the sweet smell and taste. Proper storage and disposal of oil and antifreeze is very important.

Always store automobile fluids out of reach of children and pets. Be sure containers are clearly labeled and recycle used oil and antifreeze promptly. Never mix antifreeze



with any other fluids. Here is a list of locations that will accept used oil and antifreeze for recycling in Orem (maximum of five gallons per person per day).

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If you wouldn't drink it, don't dump it!

City of Orem Public Works
955 N 900 West
Orem, UT 84057

Phone: 801-229-7500
Fax: 801-229-7599

We're on the Web!
www.orem.org

Oil & Antifreeze

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City of Orem Public Works – accepts motor oil, farm oil and antifreeze
955 N 900 W: 229-7500

AutoZone – accepts motor oil
1187 N State St: 426-4804 and
303 S State St: 224-8855

Checker Auto – accepts motor oil
1108 N State St: 224-4548 and
874 S State St: 224-0117

Jiffy Lube – accepts motor oil
91 N State St: 226-1150 and
809 N State St: 764-9500

Pep Boys – accepts motor oil
280 S State St: 224-8884

RPM Auto Parts (NAPA) – accepts motor oil, other auto fluids but not antifreeze
110 E 400 South: 226-6300

Wal-Mart Tire & Lube – accepts motor oil
1355 S Sandhill Rd: 802-7098

Grass Clippings

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Clippings can cause clogging

Not only is nutrient build-up a concern, grass clippings left in gutters and sidewalks or blown into the street can accumulate and cause water to back up rather than enter storm drains. This can contribute to localized flooding.

What should I do about grass clippings?

Some common ways that people handle grass clippings are bagging, sweeping or blowing, composting and leaving clippings on the lawn. Which way is best? Let's investigate.

Bagging

Putting clippings in bags can be an effective way to manage clippings if they are disposed of correctly. The transfer station discourages residents from throwing bags of clippings and yard wastes into the regular garbage. Large amounts of plant waste cause



problems at landfills. They have, however, setup a green waste program that turns yard waste into compost. Contact the transfer station at 225-8170 for more information.

Sweeping and blowing

Clippings that wind up on driveways and sidewalks should never be swept or blown into streets or gutters. Sweep or blow clippings back onto the lawn or sweep them into bags to be taken to the transfer station or to be composted.

Composting

Clippings can be added to a compost pile or placed in a compost bin with other plant products to create healthy mulch for landscaping. For more information about composting, contact a neighbor, visit a home improvement store or call the Utah State University extension at 851-8460.



Leaving clippings on the lawn

As mentioned previously, clippings are mostly water and nitrogen. Leaving the clippings on the lawn can reduce the amount of water and fertilizer necessary to maintain a beautiful green lawn. A mulching mower can cut clippings into smaller pieces and help reduce the amount of clumps of dried grass left on lawns.

If someone else cares for your lawn

Whether a resident or business owner, if you hire someone to care for your lawn, share the information from this article with them.

With a little effort we can keep City streets and gutters clear from clippings and reduce the risk of flooding and nutrient build-up in our water.

We want to hear from you

Do you enjoy reading WaterWatch? Is there a topic you would like to have discussed in WaterWatch?



Call Steve Johnson at 229-7556 or email sjohnson@orem.org to share your ideas.