Tips and Reminders from the City of Norman's Division of Environmental Resilience & Sustainability

Don't Blow It!

Blowing grass clippings into the street may seem harmless but grass carried by rainwater can cause pollution of our creeks and streams and contribute to flooding in our neighborhoods.

You can help by:

- Mulching your grass and blowing the clippings back onto your lawn.
- Composting your yard waste (grass, leaves, twigs, and hedge clippings).

By taking these simple steps, you can help prevent:

- Flooding caused by debris in storm drains.
- Pollutants in our waterways (nitrogen, phosphorus, and yard chemicals that are in our yard waste).
- The growth of harmful levels of algae in Lake Thunderbird.

If you prefer not to leave the clippings on your lawn or compost, yard waste is collected once per week.

- Place yard waste out for service no later than 7:30 a.m. and no more than 7 feet from the curbside.
- Use paper bags or regular cans (not your polycart) as long as they do not exceed 35 gallons.
- Tree limbs should not exceed 4 feet in length and 2 inches in diameter. They should be bundled with twine or string.

Not sure when your yard waste is picked up? Find out using our collection map: bit.ly/NormanYardWaste

Green Your Lawn

Too much fertilizer, especially phosphorus, can turn lakes and rivers green by encouraging the growth of algae. Algae takes up the air that fish need to breathe in the water, and can give off chemicals that taste bad and are bad for people's skin. Keep chemicals out of our lakes and rivers by following these tips:

- Don't apply fertilizer when it's raining or rain is in the forecast.
- Sweep or blow fertilizer that is on streets, driveways, and sidewalks back onto your yard or dispose of it properly.
- Don't apply fertilizer within 25 feet of creeks, streams, and ponds.
- Don't blow or dump grass clippings, leaves, or any yard waste into streets, storm drains or waterways.
- Test your soil before applying any fertilizer containing phosphorus.

Keeping Our Waters "P" Free

Lake Thunderbird has been identified by the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality as having impaired water quality due to elevated levels of chlorophyll-a. The high level of chlorophyll -a is directly related to increased algae production caused by excess phosphorus in the lake.

- *What is "P"?* Phosphorus, often abbreviated as "P", is a nutrient commonly found in fertilizers used by homeowners and commercial applicators to maintain and improve the health and appearance of lawns and landscaping.

- *What's the Problem?* Using too much fertilizer can cause excess growth of algae when carried by runoff into water bodies. This, in turn, can cause algae blooms which can degrade water quality, produce toxins and result in taste and odor problems in our drinking water.

- *What's the Solution?* To help protect local surface waters and our drinking water supply, the City of Norman has adopted an ordinance regulating the use of manufactured fertilizers. The ordinance is a proactive effort to preserve and protect water bodies within the City of Norman limits including our municipal water supply, Lake Thunderbird. The ordinance limits the use of phosphorus - containing fertilizer and establishes rules for the application of all fertilizers.

Understanding the Numbers on Your Fertilizer: All fertilizer labels have three numbers displayed. These numbers represent the nutrients nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Nitrogen (N): Encourages above ground growth, foliage, and lush leaves. Phosphorus (P): Encourages fruit/flower production and improves root health. Most soils in Norman already have sufficient P levels for a healthy lawn. Potassium (K): Improves overall plant health.

Check out what you should DO and DON'T at home to help!

Do:

- Obtain a soil test from a certified lab and check existing soil nutrient levels. If your soil has phosphorus levels greater than ten (10) parts per million (ppm) then no additional fertilizer is needed.
- Sweep or blow fertilizer that is on streets, driveways, and sidewalks back onto your yard or dispose of it properly.
- Use natural or organic fertilizer or other forms of naturally occurring phosphorus.
- Fertilize within the first six (6) months of turf establishment from seed or sod.
- Water within fourteen (14) hours of applying fertilizer.

Don't:

- Don't apply fertilizer when it's raining, rain is in the forecast, or when soils are saturated or frozen.
- Don't apply fertilizer within twenty-five (25) feet of creeks, streams, and ponds.
- Don't blow or dump grass clippings, leaves, or any yard waste into streets, storm drains or waterways.
- Don't store open containers of fertilizer on impervious surfaces like streets, driveways, and sidewalks.