

Did YOU KNOW?

Grass clippings and leaf litter are stormwater pollutants.

Yard debris, including leaves and other organic plant material like shrubbery trimmings and grass clippings, are a significant source of stormwater pollution. When you blow your lawn waste into the street it can clog storm drains and cause drainage and flooding issues. Storm drains are not connected to the wastewater treatment plant. There is no treatment to remove the debris from the water before it reaches nearby lakes, streams, or our Elkhart River.



Why are grass clippings and leaf litter harmful? As this waste breaks down in our local waterways, it adds excess nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus to the water. This leads to unwanted and uncontrolled growth of algae and native and non-native aquatic weeds.



What is so bad about algae? Algae will naturally occur in lakes and ponds, but excess nutrients can lead to high levels of algae growth. Apart from looking unsightly, excessive algae blooms can block out sunlight and deplete the oxygen level in the water, which can lead to fish kills.

What can you do to protect water quality while keeping your yard maintained?

- ✓ Mow your lawn often enough so no more than one-third the length of the grass is removed. Taller grass has deeper roots - that prevents soil loss & helps the rain soak into the ground.
- ✓ Leave the clippings on the lawn or compost them. Be sure to sweep or blow clippings off paved surfaces and back onto the lawn. **Intentionally blowing or placing lawn waste in the street is a violation of the City's Ordinance 4327 which deals with illicit discharges to the City storm sewer system.**
- ✓ Fertilize only when necessary, or not at all if it might rain in the next day or two.
- ✓ In the fall, place leaves for municipal collection along the curb - **NOT IN THE STREET.**
- ✓ Clean up after your pets. Scoop up pet waste and put it in the trash.
- ✓ Only use dry cleanup methods (broom and dustpan or absorbent material) for spills of chemicals or fuels; **never hose a spill into a storm drain!**
- ✓ Directing your roof drains to a rain garden can significantly reduce the stormwater runoff from your property.



To learn more about stormwater pollution prevention in your area, contact the Goshen Department of Stormwater at 574-537-3832.