

Keep PHOSPHORUS OUT of BLUE LAKE

1. Keep your grass clippings off driveways, streets and roads, so they do not enter Blue Lake.

2. Mulch or compost your grass clippings

Mulching your grass reduces the need for fertilizer: as grass clippings break down, nutrients are released into your lawn. And, less fertilizer on your lawn means less fertilizer in the water. If you don't want to mulch, compost your grass clippings. Also, don't cut your grass lower than 3 inches in the summer. Slightly longer grass will stay greener, reducing the need for watering. And, less watering means less runoff.

3. Mulch or compost your leaves

Because they blow away, leaves can be an even bigger problem than grass clippings. ***Mulch or compost the leaves in your yard as soon as they drop and as often as possible.*** This minimizes the chance that they will reach Blue Lake. Also, regularly clean leaves from your gutters so they can't be washed away with the rain. Mulching leaves and grass adds nutrients to your lawn, ***reducing the need for fertilizer.*** **Don't rake leaves into the street.**

4. Use zero-phosphorous fertilizer

If you must fertilize, do not use a fertilizer that contains phosphorous – only use a fertilizer with the middle number a 0. Remember, it's phosphorous that accelerates algae growth in Blue Lake. Consider this – one pound of phosphorous in runoff can result in 500 pounds of algae growth! ***Our soils are already phosphorous-rich.*** Our lawns ***do not need additional phosphorous*** to look green and healthy. Make sure to keep any excess fertilizer off driveways and streets – sweep the fertilizer from driveways and streets so it won't run off into Blue Lake.

5. Reduce storm water runoff from your property

Runoff is excess water that washes the grass clippings, leaves, fertilizer and other "pollutants" from lawns and driveways, carrying them into Blue Lake. To reduce runoff, ***direct your downspouts onto your lawn***, not onto hard surfaces. Also, use rain barrels to collect rain water and use it to water plants. Finally, you can ***create "rain gardens"*** - collection areas that are planted with native, moisture-loving vegetation. Every bit of runoff that ***does not*** enter Blue Lake counts.

6. Return some of your lawn – especially on a steep slope – to native grass & broad-leaf plants

Let some of your lawn revert back to native grasses, broad leaf plants, and eventually shrubs and trees. Native plants filter contaminants as well as provide a place for songbirds and waterfowl to nest.

7. Plant a buffer strip on your shoreline.

Buffer strips are areas adjacent to the shore that help to keep contaminants from entering the water. Plant the buffer area with grasses and flowers whose deep roots keep fertilizers, pet waste, and grass clippings—the fuel for the “green water” of algae blooms—from entering Blue Lake.

BLUE LAKE IS AT A CRITICAL LEVEL FOR PHOSPHORUS – WE CAN'T LET IT GET WORSE

Want to know more about these? Or about adding a buffer strip and forming a group to plan and develop your buffer strip? IF so, contact Deanna Louie at deanna@bluelakemn.com

Resources used: http://www.rwmwd.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={BC41288D-C707-4CB4-B920-531A89CB2B30}
<http://kcsxcd.org/Conservation%20Corner/cc2.htm>
<http://freshwater.org/2009/09/25/10-ways-to-keep-lakes-clean-2/>