



make a clear difference for Flathead Lake

Lake-friendly lawn

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

We fertilize the lawn. Then it rains. Lawn roots are shallow and can't soak up all the water. The rain washes the fertilizer into streams, rivers and Flathead Lake. This causes algae to grow, which

- turns the water green
- coats shoreline rocks
- uses up oxygen that fish need.

The state of Montana has declared water quality in Flathead Lake impaired with respect to nutrients.

When we fertilize the lawn, remember we're not just fertilizing the lawn.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The best way to have a lake-friendly, chemical-free lawn is to **take care of the soil:**

- **Mow high** – keep the grass at least 3 inches high and cut less than 1/3 the height during each mowing.
- **Let it lie** - leave grass clippings on the lawn using a mulching mower.
- **Avoid pesticides**, which kill beneficial soil organisms.
- **Conduct a soil test** to understand the amounts of nutrients already in the soil.

Contact the Flathead Lakers for a free property consultation, which includes a soil test and recommendations.

Local regulations prohibit the application of any kind of fertilizer within 20 feet from the lake!

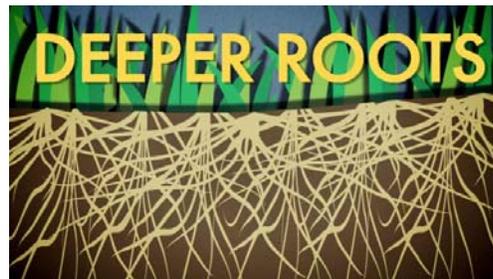
CLEAN WATER TOOL KIT: Lake-friendly lawn

WHY DOES IT WORK?

The roots of your lawn grow as deep as the grass grows tall, so taller grass has deeper, healthier roots that can soak up polluted runoff. Using a mulching mower works for water quality because grass is mostly water and nitrogen; as it breaks down, you're watering and naturally feeding your lawn but not the lake!

Flathead Lake's water is so clear because its headwaters are relatively free of nutrients. Lawn fertilizers could turn it green.

Fertile soils don't need fertilizer. A teaspoon of soil has billions of beneficial organisms, which break down organic matter and provide the right amount of nutrients to turf roots. Avoiding lawn fertilizer protects clean water because fertilizer contains nitrogen and phosphorus, nutrients that feed lawns, but also feed algae. For example, according to limnology (lake study) textbooks, **just 1 pound of phosphorus can produce 300 - 500 pounds of algae**. A bag of typical fertilizer instructs people to add about 50 pounds of phosphorus to a half-acre lot each year. Most lawns already have enough phosphorus and can't take up any more, so it runs off. Avoiding fertilizer makes sense for water quality and can save money.



Flathead Lake's water is so clear because its headwaters are relatively free of



Mats of algae grow in lakes where nutrients runoff from lawns

WHERE CAN WE LEARN MORE?

Find out more about caring for our lawns, soil and clean water. The Flathead Lakers offer:

- **Free property consultation and soil test;**
- **Flathead Clean Water Toolkit website** – visit often for links to information about soil, fertilizers, pesticides, and alternatives to lawns: www.flatheadlakers.org/toolkit
- **Waterfront Landscapes brochure** – envision more privacy and less lawn using native plants.
- **Walk and Talk Tours** - Meet neighbors and see lake-friendly lawn-care practices.

Together, we can keep Flathead Lake blue! Visit the Flathead Lake Clean Water Toolkit:

www.flatheadlakers.org/toolkit or call 406-883-1341.

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