

The **GRASS** isn't always greener on the other side... of the **STORM DRAIN!**



Why are grass clippings and leaf litter harmful to stormwater and our lakes?

Yard waste → contributes excess nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus → which contributes to unwanted and uncontrolled growth of algae and invasive aquatic weeds.



What's so bad about algae?

Algae is a naturally occurring organism in lakes and ponds, but excess nutrients can lead to imbalance and high levels of algae. There are different types of algae, some of which cause problems. Apart from looking very unsightly, excess algae can lead to the deoxygenation of water with a detrimental effect on pond or lake life, including potential fish kills.

What should I do with my grass clippings and leaf litter?

There are many good alternatives!

- **Leave grass clippings on your lawn**—As the grass clippings decompose, they will provide a source of nutrients for your lawn, reducing your fertilizer needs and saving you money.
- **Bag and remove grass clippings and leaves**—You can have them picked up on your yard waste day, OR you can compost them! Compost provides nutrients and organic matter to improve your soil. Compost is great for the garden but can also be used as mulch around trees, shrubs, and other plantings.
- **Don't forget to sweep up!**—Grass clippings and leaf litter left in the road or on the driveway will wash away in the next rain. Runoff will move the grass clippings and leaves into the storm drain, where they can lead to clogging and flooding, in addition to harming the nearest pond, stream, or lake!



QUIZ TIME!

Which is more harmful to the stormdrain and lake system: oil or grass clippings? Make your best guess then check out the answer at the bottom of this article.

Why Should I care?

EVERYONE should be concerned about stormwater quality because what we put down the storm drain will eventually end up in places like Lake Erie and local rivers, streams and creeks. Grass clippings are great for your yard, but damage our waterways, fueling weed and algae growth. So keep yard waste at home and put it to work for you.

Help Keep Our Lakes Beautiful & Clean!

There are many more ways you can help:

- reduce fertilizer use
- dispose of household hazardous waste properly
- pick up after your pets
- plant a rain garden
- report illegal dumping
- and many, many more!



QUIZ ANSWER: If you guessed **GRASS CLIPPINGS** you are right!

Why? If you were to pour a quart of oil and a bag of grass clippings down the storm drain at the same time, clearly the oil would be the most harmful to stormwater. **HOWEVER**, most people know not to pour oil down the storm drain but may not think twice about hosing/sweeping their yard waste down the storm drain. And when you examine the overall cumulative effect of thousands of people sending their grass clippings down the storm drain versus the few who put oil down the drain, grass clippings becomes one of the **TOP POLLUTANTS** of stormwater.

GREEN UP

