

LANDSCAPE WITH CLEAN WATER IN MIND

Watersheds are large areas that drain into common lakes, rivers or oceans. Your landscape is one part of the large system that is your watershed. A rainstorm or excessive irrigation can wash pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers from your landscape onto streets, into the storm water system, and even into the public water supply.

Fertilizer: Many homeowners use more fertilizer than necessary. Fertilizers contain nutrients that may contribute to excessive vegetation and low oxygen levels in the water.

Keep in mind that the warm season grasses generally used in the midlands of SC such as centipede, bermuda, St. Augustine or zoysia generally require less fertilizer than others. You may not need any fertilizer, especially if you use a mulching mower and allow grass clippings to remain on the lawn and decompose.

Soil Testing Homeowners can get their soil tested at Clemson Extension for a small fee. This will tell you exactly what kind and how much fertilizer is needed for your yard and garden, saving you valuable time and money, and protecting water quality.



Based on the results of the soil test, choose a fertilizer blend that provides the recommended balance of nutrients. When you shop, look for fertilizers labeled for southern lawns and apply them per label directions. You may also choose to use organic slow-release fertilizers such as well-composted manure, corn meal, cottonseed meal or other organic mixes. Remember, the simplest way to fertilize your lawn is to use a mulching mower and leave grass clippings to decompose into your lawn.

Pesticides: Consumer pesticide products are readily available. But unless the product is formulated for the pest you have, and you apply it in the right way and at the right time, you could be wasting your money and doing more harm than good.



The first step is to identify your pest. Then choose the right pesticide for it, apply the minimum amount at the proper time, and follow all instructions and warnings on the label. Keep in mind that pesticides generally will kill most insects including beneficial ones. Unless specifically stated otherwise, should not be used near water bodies or storm water drains. You may find it simpler to contract with a landscape service which is licensed to apply pesticides. Often professional formulations are more effective than those available at retail outlets.

Herbicides: Many homeowners can't tolerate weeds in their lawns, but excess herbicide application may create intolerable conditions in our watershed!

Many common herbicides have been shown to cause harmful effects in aquatic systems-- particularly on frogs and toads. Unless specifically stated otherwise, herbicides should never be used near water bodies or storm water drains. Commercial fertilizers may also contain herbicides as in "weed and feed" formulations. If you feel you need to use herbicides, just as with pesticides, identify the type of weeds you have, choose the right herbicide for them, apply the minimum amount at the proper time, and follow all instructions and warnings on the label. You may find it simpler to contract with a licensed landscape service.

Irrigation: Make your watering or irrigation effective.

Most lawns in the midlands are planted with warm season grasses, which grow best with about 1 inch of water per week. When there has been no rain, apply 1/2 inch every three to five days. Too much water may wash fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides and pet waste into the storm water system. Too much water will also cause increased growth so you will have to mow more often, and it may allow diseases to develop in your lawn. You can even let your lawn go dormant during periods of drought, saving water and money. If you have an irrigation system, it should be tuned to provide the correct amount and flow of water on the proper schedule, and should never be allowed to operate during a rain storm.



Alternative Landscapes: A turfgrass lawn is not your only option!



You've probably heard 'If you can't grow grass, turn it into a natural area.' You can do that with small areas or your entire lawn by utilizing low-maintenance ground cover plants, natural mulch materials, native plant materials, and other landscaping techniques. You could also explore a xeriscape which simply means a sustainable, drought-resistant landscape that does not require additional water.

For more information about water-friendly lawn and landscape management, see Carolina Clear's Non-Point Source Toolbox:

<https://www.clemson.edu/extension/carolinaclear/regional-consortiums/apcsp/toolbox/index.html>