

WATERways

Volume 19, Number 2: November 2015

DURHAM



1 8 6 9
CITY OF MEDICINE



How well do you know your lawn?

Healthy lawns are a popular addition to any home landscape. Whether you hire a lawn service or take care of it yourself, consider some key points that will help you grow a green and water-friendly lawn.

First, know your grass type. Fescue, a common cool season grass, should only be fertilized in the spring and fall. Adding nutrients in the summer can damage the grass and pollute our rivers and lakes. Warm season grasses like zoysiagrass do need fertilizer in the summer.

Next, figure out which type of fertilizer is best and how much you need by testing your soil. There are three numbers on a fertilizer



Healthy soil and a good root system are keys to a green lawn.

bag that show the ratio of nitrogen to phosphorous to potassium. Nitrogen must be applied each year. Nitrogen not used by the plants washes away. Phosphorus and potassium stay in the soil. You may not need to add any.

What about slow-release versus liquid? Slow-release fertilizers last the longest and promote uniform grass growth. Also, less nitrogen ends up in local streams when you use slow-release instead of liquid fertilizer. Always sweep up extra fertilizer that gets onto sidewalks, your driveway, or the street.

Want some free nutrients? Let grass clippings stay on your lawn after mowing. “The Sodfather” has some “mow high and let it lie” tips in this fun two-minute video: <http://bit.ly/1JWVyyvO>. Never blow or sweep clippings or leaves into the street or storm drain.

Avoid “weed ‘n feed” products. The type of weed killer included may not be effective on your weeds. It may harm other plants and the environment. Spot treating weeds is a better practice.

You may need to add lime to lower the pH of our clay-rich, acidic soils. The soil test results will tell you how much.

Healthy soil is high in organic matter. Adding compost or manure increases pore space and feeds helpful bacteria. Healthy soil soaks in more rain water, a good thing for local creeks.

Soil testing is free

April through November (\$4 per sample December-March). Pick up and drop off your soil sample kit at the Durham County Center, 721 Foster Street. You will need several boxes, one for each part of your yard. Test your soil every three years.

Lawns require about an inch of water per week. This will vary depending on time of year, grass type, and stage of growth. Water wisely! Overwatering or irrigating sidewalks and streets wastes money and harms our waterways. The City of Durham only allows watering on certain days and at certain times. Details are on the Water Management web page: <http://durhamnc.gov/1114/Odd-Even-Watering-Schedule>.

Think creatively about your lawn. Clover, ground covers, low wildflowers, and herbs can make great lawns. In fact, grass-only lawns are a recent cultural norm.

The massive drought in the western U.S. has led many people to re-think lawns altogether. Landscapes that use more native plants and less grass help the water supply, keep creeks cleaner, and attract the bees and butterflies we need for pollination.

Taking proper care of your lawn adds value to your home. Using water-friendly approaches helps keep our water resources safe for everyone.

Stormwater Project Updates



Twenty gallons of lake water per minute flow through this device to grow algae and remove nutrients from the water.

The City is testing the use of an **Algal Turf Scrubber® (ATS)** to improve water quality. Too many nutrients in streams and lakes cause harmful or nuisance algal blooms.

The ATS pulls in lake water and sends it through a flowway, pictured above. Algae takes nutrients out of the water as it grows.

Operators remove the algae on a regular basis. The cleaner water is returned to the lake.

After a year of testing the water that comes out, the City will determine if this is a cost-effective way to reduce the amount of nutrients in the lake.

Construction will begin on the **Third Fork Creek Stream Restoration** in spring, 2016. Repairs to the stream and the trail next to it will result in cleaner water and fewer trail closures.

Improvements include stream bank stabilization, replacing clogged culverts with flood flow channels, replacing sections of paved trail with boardwalks, removing debris jams, and cleaning sediment from inactive channels. The design is based on a year-long engineering and flood impact study.

The **Little Lick Creek Watershed Improvement Plan** is almost done. The plan lists and ranks projects that will improve

water quality in the creek. Rankings are based on field work, watershed modeling, cost estimates, value to the community, and ease of building the project.

The Environmental Protection Agency recognized Durham's **Rain Catchers project** with a green infrastructure award in June, 2015. Green infrastructure reduces polluted runoff by soaking in stormwater close to its source. The project put in over 250 rain gardens, cisterns, and trees.



Cardinal flowers were blooming in rain gardens across Durham in August. The native species attracts hummingbirds and butterflies.

Save the Date

March 12-19, 2016 Creek Week

Creek Week brings together neighbors, businesses, and organizations to sponsor events that help us to discover, explore, and protect Durham's water resources. www.DurhamCreekWeek.org

Follow Us on Social Media



www.Facebook.com/DurhamNCStormwater



[@DurhamStormH2O](https://twitter.com/DurhamStormH2O)

DURHAM



1 8 6 9
CITY OF MEDICINE

Public Works Department - Stormwater and GIS Services

(919) 560-4326 - www.durhamnc.gov

Design/Construction/Plan Review - Drainage/Flooding Concerns - Floodplain Information

Public Outreach- Surface Water Quality - GIS

Report Water Pollution: stormwaterquality@durhamnc.gov or (919) 560-SWIM

Stormwater Billing: SWSBU@durhamnc.gov or (919) 560-1258

Notice Under the Americans with Disabilities Act:

Persons who require assistance should call (919) 560-4197, ext. 21254, TTY (919) 560-1200 or email ADA@durhamnc.gov no later than 48 hours before the event.

