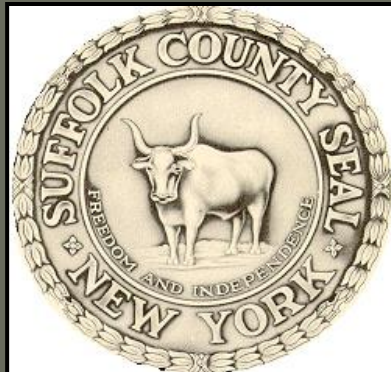


# Self Guided Presentation

## **Best Management Practices**

For Homeowners, Lawn Care Professionals, and Retail/Wholesale Businesses Selling Lawn Fertilizer

Provided by the Suffolk County Department of Economic Development and Planning



# UNDERSTANDING

## Best Management Practices

- **Best Management Practices (BMPs)** are environmentally safe, effective, and practical methods that can prevent or reduce the amount of pollution and harm from activities around homes or businesses.
- These lawn care BMPs can reduce nitrogen leaching and runoff that pose a threat to our ground and surface waters while saving time and money!



# BMPs for Lawn Care

- **Fertilize in Late Spring**

Fertilize the end of April or in the month of May.



- **Focus on Fall Fertility**

Fertilize at the end of summer, or early fall.

This is the best time of year for grass to take up and store food.



- **Avoid Fertilizing in Summer**

When lawns are typically under stress.



# BMPs for Lawn Care

## Mow High and keep turf cover dense

- Keep your turf at 3” or higher. This means you’ll have enough leaf area to provide food for a good root system. A 3” height helps to conserve moisture and shades out weeds.
- High density grass means fewer weeds so feel free to overseed.

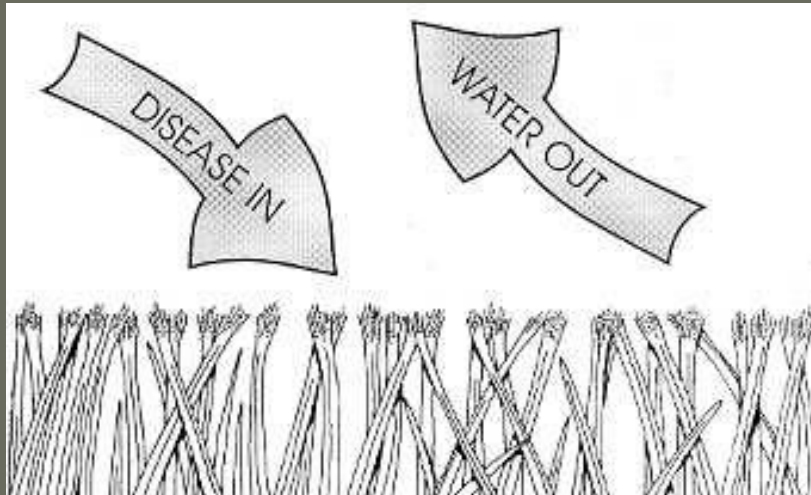
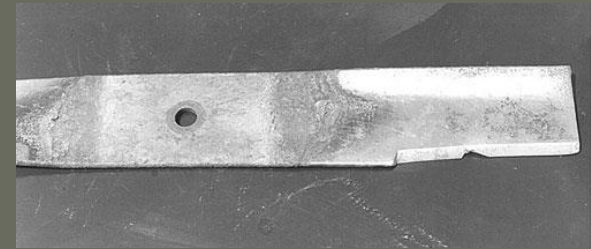


# BMPs for Lawn Care

## Keep Mower Blade Sharp

A clean cut prevents disease.

Don't mow with a blade like this!



← Results of mowing with a dull blade.



# BMPs for Lawn Care

## Leave Clippings on Lawn

- ❑ They are high quality, free fertilizer and do not contribute to thatch.



- ❑ Do not “de-thatch” your lawn. It damages the roots. Core aerate instead.
- ❑ Keep fertilizer and grass clippings off sidewalks and driveways. This prevents runoff of nutrients into our waterways which can cause nitrate pollution.

# **BMPs for Lawn Care**

## **Core Aerate to Reduce Compaction**

- **Compaction can lead to problems for grass such as poor growth and poor use of fertilizer and water.**
- **Core aerate to increase water, nutrient and oxygen movement in the soil profile.**

# BMPs for Lawn Care

## Select the Best Grass for Your Yard's Specific Situation

- ✓ Dry shade, no traffic: use fine fescue
- ✓ Full sun with traffic: use tall fescue
- ✓ Full sun with no traffic: use tall or fine fescue
- ✓ No sun: avoid the use of lawn grasses, consider the use of ground covers.
- ✓ Limit the use of Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass because they require more nitrogen fertilizer.



Use groundcovers  
wherever possible



Use more fescues or native grasses,  
they require less fertilizer



# BMPs for Lawn Care

Test Your Soil pH. Ideal is 6-7. Below this level is acid and may require lime. Improper pH leads to poor fertilizer use by turf.

Contact your local  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
office for complete information  
on soil testing.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of  
Suffolk County Horticulture Hotline:  
631-727-4126

Website:

<https://ccesuffolk.org/horticulture-diagnostic-labs>



# BMPs for Lawn Care

## Water Properly

- ✓ Lawns usually need about an 1" of water per week during the growing season. Supplement with irrigation *only* when necessary. Avoid overwatering which can lead to nitrogen leaching into the groundwater.
- ✓ Be sure to water to wet the soil where the roots grow, to about a 4"- 6" depth. Avoid frequent shallow watering which does not encourage good root growth or turf health.
- ✓ Water between midnight and 8:00 am to prevent prolonged periods of wet grass and water no more than 3 times per week.

# BMPs for Lawn Care

## Be Sure to Calibrate Your Spreader

How do you know if your spreader is applying too much or too little fertilizer?

- See the “simple spreader calibration” PowerPoint presentation found on the “Healthy Lawns, Clean Water” website.
- Individual applications of nitrogen should not exceed 1lb/1000 sq. ft. and should total no more than 2-3lbs of nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. per year.



# BMPs for Lawn Care

## Use Native Plants!

- Native plant species naturally require less fertilizer and water to thrive because they are accustomed to the local conditions.
- Native plants can make your outdoor space more interesting and attract beautiful pollinators such as butterflies and hummingbirds!



# Want to know more?

- Visit Suffolk County's websites:  
<http://healthylawns.suffolkcountyny.gov>  
or go to  
<https://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Economic-Development-and-Planning/Planning-and-Environment/Water-Quality-Improvement/-Healthy-Lawns-Clean-Water-Fertilizer-Reduction-Program>
- Visit Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County's website:  
<http://www.ccesuffolk.org>  
or call **631.727.7850**