

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Storm drains lead directly to local waters such as Spring Creek, Utah Lake, and the Jordan River. There is no filtration or treatment process. Pollutants that enter storm drains end up in the water we drink, fish, and swim. Here are a few lawn and yard care tips that will help you minimize the effect you have on local water resources.

FERTILIZING:

- Fertilize sparingly. If you must fertilize, September is the best month because lawns develop most of their root systems during the fall. Be sure to use slow-release fertilizer. The label should read slow release or time release fertilizer with water-insoluble or slowly available soluble nitrogen.
- If you want to fertilize more than once, don't fertilize in the spring until you have mowed the lawn three times.
- More is not always better! Be sure to apply fertilizers and pesticides only as directed. Use no more than one to two pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square feet. Using less will save you money too! If you use a lawn care company, ask them about their environmental options and certifications.
- Avoid using fertilizers and pesticides near wellheads or within 75 feet of waterways.
- Check the weather forecast before applications, and don't apply fertilizers or pesticides when there is rain predicted.
- Avoid using combination fertilizer/pesticide products. Hand pick weeds when possible, and if you must treat weeds or insects with pesticides, spot treat them rather than dousing the entire lawn.
- Mow sharp and high. A sharp mower blade cuts grass cleanly which improves turf health and promotes denser growth. Setting the mower deck high (2 ½ inches or more) helps lawns shade out weeds and survive dry spells, reducing the need for weed control and irrigation.

SWEEPING:

- Anything that's lying on pavement is more easily washed down storm drains by stormwater or other water sources.
- Use a leaf blower or a broom to push stray grass clippings and fertilizer granules off sidewalks and driveways onto your lawn where they can do some good.
- Sweep, don't hose, the driveway.

- Mulch, compost, or bag and throw away fallen leaves and garden cuttings so they don't get washed away during storms and end up in a local waterbody. Excessive organic matter in waterbodies lowers oxygen levels resulting in fish kills and algae blooms.

WATERING WITHOUT WASTE:

- Adjust sprinklers so that they don't water paved surfaces. In the event that it's unavoidable, direct the flow of water toward your lawn or garden.
- Check the weather forecast. If you have automatic sprinklers, be sure they aren't programmed to water during the rain.
- Don't water in the heat of the day. Watering in the morning or evening minimizes the water lost to evaporation.
- Consider using slow-watering techniques such as drip irrigation or soaker hoses.
- Use mulch in gardens, around shrubs, and under trees to reduce water evaporation from the soil, keep the ground cooler, and inhibit weeds.
- Direct rain water from roof drains into flower beds or onto lawns. Consider using rain barrels to harvest and use roof runoff. By collecting and using rainwater you can reduce the irrigation water you use. It also helps to reduce stormwater pollution, erosion, and flooding.

THINK NATIVE:

- Consider planting more native plants. These plants have adapted to the local geography, hydrology, and climate of the area. As a result, they tend to need less care, require little or no irrigation or fertilizer and are resistant to local pests and diseases. Salt Lake Country has created guide for choosing native plants which is available at <https://slco.org/watershed/stream-friendly-practices/choosing-native-plants/>.