

Lake Ecology

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It's that time of the year again when we start getting our lawns ready for the season and we have to start thinking about planting and watering. I wanted to give you some guidelines and tips about some procedures to follow. A lake community is a very environmentally sensitive area and we have to be very cautious about what we do every day when it comes to lawn care, cleaning products, and water usage. If we all do our part, it makes a big difference.

First our lake is the lowest point in our surrounding watershed. Everything higher in elevation than the Lake drains into it. So everything we put on our lawns and in our septic systems will eventually end up in our beautiful lake. All the catch basins on our streets flow directly to the lake. There are about 540 homes in our lake and approximately 7 or 8 miles of roads around Lake Shawnee. All of this developed area puts a tremendous amount of stress on our lake. The 80 homes that are on the lake have to be especially careful because of their close proximity to the lake, but we all have to be careful of what we do because all the run off from our properties will eventually get there. So let's talk about some of the things we can do.

Lawn Care The first thing most home owners want to do is feed (fertilize) their lawns to help them recover from the winter. The key here is to use a non-phosphate fertilizer. Phosphates in a lake are one of the key ingredients to foster weed growth. When you purchase fertilizer the middle number is the phosphate content. Eric at American Hardware has several brands that meet this standard. Jonathan Green "Weed and Feed" and Crabgrass Preventer is one of them. He also has a Scott's Weed Control that is very good. Stop in and see Eric; he is very knowledgeable. If you are growing a new lawn it may be impossible to get away from phosphates since this is the main ingredient that promotes growth. Please just try to use something that is very low in phosphates and use it minimally. When you are watering that new lawn, water conservatively - ten or fifteen minutes with your hose or a half hour with the sprinkler is more than enough. Putting your sprinkler on and going to work is a tremendous waste of water and is also unnecessary. Try watering in the evening (the best) or early morning before the sun comes out. Watering during the day is wasteful because you can lose up to half your water to evaporation. Remember, don't OVERWATER! Plants need a lot less water than we think.

Geese Control (Lake Front Homeowners) Eric at the hardware store also has a new product that you can spray on your lawn (by attaching it to your garden hose) to prevent geese from coming on your lawn and eating. It is perfectly safe for all other wildlife if it drains into the lake after a rain. It does not harm the geese. It just makes the grass distasteful so they will find some other place to eat. It is called Goose Repellent/ Liquid Fence.

Cleaning Products Most of our cleaning products end up in the sink or in the toilet and into your septic system. Try to avoid cleaning products that contain any harmful chemicals. Seventh Generation products are all environmentally safe and are sold at many local grocery stores now. Also Trader Joes (Florham Park) has many cleaning products that are environmentally friendly. We all need to read ingredients so we can choose products that will not harm our lake. Luckily all laundry detergents now have NO phosphates. Look for detergents that are sold in recycled boxes (for example, Tide).

So let's all try and do our part. Thank you in advance for trying some of these suggestions and if you have any questions do not hesitate to give me a call.