



Spring Reminder- As the days get longer and temperatures rise, we start to turn our attention to those spring activities which include getting lawns healthier and removing the salt and grit from our cars once the hose is turned on. We have many new residents in Lake Shawnee, so much of this "Ask Jeff" is directed to them since I say this every year at this time. Please indulge me as I give new members tips on helping to keep Lake Shawnee as clean as we possibly can. Thank you! What we do in our yards and in our driveways can affect the health of this lake. Why? Because every catch basin (no matter where you live in our community) drains into our lake. Material from your yard or driveway with the help of a heavy rain can wind up in the road and into a nearby catch basin. We just have to be vigilant on how we do things on our properties. Living in a lake community has certain responsibilities that we all have to be aware of. I thank you all in advance for doing the right thing to protect our beautiful lake.

Lawns - If there are remaining leaves on your lawn, please bag them and put them out on Wednesday for pickup or take to the town which has a compost pile. Please do not blow them into the street. If you have a landscaper who takes care of your lawn, make sure they know what to do. Most companies blow them into their trucks and take them with them. When leaves get into our lake, they decompose and eventually become sediment and our lake gets shallower. Thank you!

Fertilizers - Many residents use fertilizers to make the lawns greener and healthier. All I ask is that you make sure there is no phosphorus in the product you are using. Most companies have eliminated that material but some still have it in there. Phosphorus can add to weed growth in our lake which is not good. If you are not sure what to use, ask Eric at our local True Value hardware store for help.

Car Washing - Biggest tip here, go to a car wash! The chance of washing your car in your driveway and it getting into a catch basin is very likely. Many would say it's a small amount but remember we have 540 homes in this lake. Even if 25 percent of those homes wash their cars, it can result in five to six hundred gallons of filthy, soapy water getting into our lake. Like many of your children, I swim in this lake every day during the summer so we all want the cleanest water possible.

Thank you for letting me share these few small things to help protect our lake. Remember it takes a village and our community does a great job of being aware and doing the right thing.

Monarch Butterflies- I recently read that Monarch Butterflies were placed on the Threatened Species list because their numbers have dropped dramatically. This is due to loss of habitat and climate change. Besides their beauty, they are prolific pollinators for many plants.

Monarchs go through four life cycles (egg, caterpillar, cocoon, and eventually a beautiful orange and black butterfly) several times a year. They are found all over the country and into Canada, but are most abundant east of the Rockies especially in NJ with the many plants we grow here. In the fall, they migrate to an area in Mexico for the winter. Excessive logging in that area has reduced this winter habitat. Also, because of climate change and warmer weather in the Fall, they get tricked and leave too late and succumb to the cold on their trip south. In the Spring, they return to lay their eggs on the leaves of a specific plant called milkweed, which many of us are familiar with. Unfortunately there is much less milkweed in NJ the past few years, which has also led to the monarch's decline. Here is where we help.

Please check your property to see if you have it growing there already (not sure what it looks like, just Google it). The seeds are in large pods on the plant. Many have at least 100 seeds or more in the pod. If you have seeds, please announce it on the Lake Shawnee Facebook page so you can share them with your neighbors. Farmstead Golf Course has about 100 plants on their lake course. I always grab at least 10 pods when I play. I always share the pods (Contact me if you are interested) so others can help save this amazing butterfly. So, please look for those plants at home or on your travels. Any way we can help the monarch numbers increase would be great. Thank you!