



Lake Lillinonah Watershed Guidelines Questions and Answers

FRIENDS
OF THE LAKE

Friends of the Lake is working with Hydro Technologies to address the pollution that is greatly affecting Lake Lillinonah. Although a great deal of the problem comes from a few businesses, we also must carry some of the burden of responsibility.

You may be surprised to discover that traditional landscaping ideas have no place on yards that border a lake. Manicured lawns extending to the water's edge, along with the fertilizer and pesticide applications required to maintain them, can have serious negative impact on the Lake Lillinonah water quality.

The water quality of Lake Lillinonah is affected not only by the homes and businesses along the shore, but those that are set further back.

Negative impacts from both shoreline and uphill residences can be minimized with a landscaping plan that places less emphasis on lawns and incorporates a variety of plants adapted to conditions near the water's edge. Lawns can be redesigned to allow a buffer zone along the lake. Careful landscape design can actually increase the value of your property as well as keep the lake water you enjoy clear and clean.

A few simple suggestions and guidelines:

1. **Buffer** - stop mowing down to the water. Grass planted to the water's edge is seldom the best choice, from either an aesthetic or a water quality standpoint. Many lakeside homes have very sandy, acidic, infertile soils. Grass isn't naturally adapted to this type of environment. That means a lot of work is required to keep it growing—fertilizer, lime, pesticides, watering and mowing.

Suggestions

- Let existing grass grow long—it will help filter pollutants from rainwater while you're working on your other plantings. The grasses will grow 12 to 24 inches tall before going to seed
- Carefully preserve any and all existing natural vegetation at the edge of the lake
- Substituting a variety of plants that are naturally adapted to the soils on your site has many advantages

Benefits

- Screens undesirable views while framing good ones.
- Reduces the time and money spent on lawn maintenance, fertilizers and other lawn chemicals
- Helps filter pollutants that wash off roof, driveways and other hard surfaces;
- Preserves the natural appearance of the shoreline;
- Offers better protection against shoreline erosion;
- Provides increased diversity and improved habitat for wildlife.

2. **Fertilizer** - The "F" word (fertilizer) should be avoided when talking about lakes. Fertilizer is very harmful to Lakes! It can trigger severe algae blooms, which can leave the lake green, smelly and scummy. Does any of this sound familiar to you?

- Don't use fertilizers right next to the shoreline.
- Don't leave them on the soil surface- put them in the planting hole.
- Don't apply them before a rainstorm.
- Don't over-fertilize

We understand that most new plantings will need some fertilizers initially to be able to successfully take root and grow. Some good options are:

- Take a soil test and fertilize the planting hole based on the test results.
- Use slow release fertilizer tablets in the plant hole.
- Use small amounts of organic matter (such as composted cow manure) mixed well with the soil in the planting hole.

3. **Erosion Controls** - Be sure no soil can wash to the lake. You can often accomplish this by careful planning:

- Don't expose large areas of soil.
- Preserve natural vegetation between disturbed soil and the lake.
- Mulch exposed soil immediately. Mulch and use erosion control netting on slopes.
- Schedule work for the dry season (to avoid thunderstorms). Water your new plantings carefully.
- Use a silt fence or a hay bale barrier on the down slope side of disturbed areas if needed to protect the lake.

4. Do not put any branches, clippings, leaves, etc., into the Lake!

This is just a brief tip sheet. In the coming months, we are working on developing a more in-depth Watershed Education and Treatment Program for Lake Lillinonah. In the meantime, please pass this information along to your landscaper. It is important that each of us continues to do our part in protecting our lake.