

Fall Lawn Care Tips for the Riparian Landowner

What Is A Riparian?

A riparian is a person who owns a parcel of land which borders a natural body of water within the State of Michigan.

Riparian areas serve many important functions, including purifying water by removing sediments and other contaminants; reducing streambank and stream channel erosion; and supporting a diversity of plant and wildlife species.

Riparian landowners have a great responsibility to preventing polluting pollutants from entering the waterways. Here are some tips to maintaining a healthy lawn in the fall and throughout the rest of the year:

Mowing Your Lawn

- Keep your grass 2 ½ to 3 inches high throughout the fall. Cutting the grass shorter than 2 inches will limit its ability to store food in the spring.
- Avoid stockpiling or burning grass clippings, leaves and other debris along streambanks, which can lead to erosion and vegetation loss. Yard waste deposited in the waterways can cause significant changes in nutrient levels, leading to poor water quality.

Recycling Leaves – Don't Bag Them

- Compost or recycle fallen leaves instead of bagging them. The leaves can either be chopped up into smaller pieces with your mower and left on the lawn to provide nutrients for the winter, or can be added to your compost pile. Leaves can also serve as mulching material for flower beds or other areas around your home.

Weed and Pest Control

- Fall is generally the best time to apply fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides to your lawn. Disease and weed problems are usually less severe when fall fertilization is practiced. Heat and drought tolerance are generally better, thus enhancing summer lawn quality.
- Do not use weed or pest control products near streambanks or lake shores.
- Remember to maintain a buffer strip of 25-feet or greater of dense vegetation, preferably native plants that establish deep roots, which are less susceptible to soil erosion.
- Speak with your lawn care professional regarding slow release fertilizers, which have far less environmental impacts. There are many non-toxic alternatives to try. For more information, contact SOCWA at 248-288-5150 or MSU Extension at 248-858-0885.

Riparian responsibility is important all year long. This fall, challenge yourself to learn more about reducing the use of chemicals to control pests and weeds in your yard, finding alternatives and creating a healthier lawn and landscape.