



## FACT SHEET

### Eco-Friendly Lawncare

There are many things shoreline residents can do to help protect water quality while still maintaining a perfectly green lawn:

- ◆ Leave grass clippings on the lawn to help retain moisture and provide vital nutrients for the soil.
- ◆ Allow grass height to be 2 ½ to 3 inches high. This allows greener, healthier growth and reduces the need for fertilizer.
- ◆ Plant a fescue mixture rather than bluegrass when establishing a new lawn. Fescue requires much less nitrogen than bluegrass and is better suited to northern Michigan weather. Always choose a locally adapted grass. Consult local nursery experts.
- ◆ Leave natural vegetation along the shoreline. Trees, shrubs, flowers and ground cover filter pollutants and reduce erosion. Natural vegetation costs 48 percent less to maintain than traditional landscaping!
- ◆ Plant a greenbelt garden between your lawn and the water to complement natural vegetation. Use native plants, which have longer roots to absorb more runoff and pollutants, reduce erosion, and require little if any fertilizers, pesticides and maintenance. Some varieties include Purple Coneflower, Black-Eyed Susans, Dwarf Lilacs, River Birch and Juniper.

### If you use fertilizer:

- ◆ Have your soil tested to see if it even needs fertilizer. The Michigan State University Extension office in Bellaire conducts soil testing and fertilizer recommendations. Tests only cost about \$10.
- ◆ Select a phosphorous-free fertilizer. The middle number should be 0. Excess nutrients such as phosphorus is one of the biggest threats to Grand Traverse Bay. Fertilizers containing even small amounts of phosphorous causes harmful algae growth that degrades water quality.
- ◆ Use the smallest amount necessary. The average lawn is overloaded with 10 times as many chemical pesticides and fertilizers per acre as typical farmland, meaning that many lawns are overfertilized.
- ◆ Do not apply fertilizer right before it rains, as it will wash into the water.