



Answers to Key Questions

How to Maintain a Healthy-Lake Lawn

The science and the concern of watershed residents are a call to action to check fertilizer use around the lake.

Watershed residents' number one concern is **water quality** because it affects our enjoyment with family and friends. Unused nutrients, especially synthetic fertilizers (phosphorus (P) and nitrogen (N)) which are more soluble, are pulled over time by gravity to the bottom of the watershed bowl and feed the aquatic plants and algae including the blue-green algae (which is actually a cyanobacteria). Even small amounts quickly add up; only 1 lb of a nutrient can grow on average at least 500 lb of living algae including the cyanobacteria.

In this information sheet:

1. Some general questions and answers
2. Specifics of what to do for your lawn

General Questions, Answered...

What are lake-friendly lawn maintenance practices?

Lake-friendly lawn maintenance starts with appreciating that we live in a watershed with a web of life that is tied to the aquatic and soil webs of life.

Yes, it is a recreational lake and to keep it one that we can all enjoy, we must do what we can to work within those systems.

Ideally, for the lake, lots would have about 25% of their total lot area covered with trees and natural vegetation.

The soils' natural web of life gets suppressed by the use of synthetic fertilizers and harmful chemicals. Lake-friendly lawn maintenance focuses on promoting the soils health through methods and products that work with nature and avoid adding any unnecessary extra nutrients to the soil, so that collectively we not adding nutrients to the lake.

What is the best?

The cheapest, easiest and best lawn practices do not use any fertilizer of any kind, at all. Some people have reported that they have adopted a relaxed attitude about the appearance of their lawn, re-naturalized parts of their lawns that they do not use, and of the lawn that they do retain, take pride in owning a lawn with a lake-friendly appearance with some plant diversity in the lawn. This will also give you more time to enjoy family and friends.

There are methods to encourage a healthy lawn without adding fertilizers or other chemicals.



What is a herbicide-free way to control dandelions?

Option 1: Cover driveways or walkways with tarps, cardboard, or black plastic

Sunlight is needed for photosynthesis, so covering the dandelions will eventually kill them.

Option 2: Vinegar Solution

One method that seems to work, but is not scientifically proven is a vinegar solution. The acidity of the vinegar, made more potent by the salt, “sucks the water out” to kill the dandelions, while the soap makes the mixture better adhere to the leaves. There are many different recipes available online, but it is suggested to use low salt mixtures with an organic biodegradable soap, two recipes:

- A. More effective, more lawn kill: 1 gallon of vinegar (5% acetic acid) , 1 cup of salt, and 1 tablespoon of biodegradable dish soap
- B. Less effective, less lawn kill: 1 gallon of vinegar (5% acetic acid) and 2 tablespoons of biodegradable dish soap

The vinegar solution works best when it is applied in dry sunny conditions and may require multiple applications because there is no residual action, allowing new weeds to grow in replacement. Wait at least two weeks between applications to reduce the salinity and pH impact on the soil.

Caution: Use as a spot treatment and in small quantities only. As it may kill off healthy lawn, we suggest testing it on a small section first. As well, the salt and the vinegar can still impact the natural soil salinity and pH; therefore, it is best to use on driveways and sidewalks to limit the impact.

What if my lawn has bare spots, is brand new, damaged, or I’ve been using chemical fertilizers and have suppressed my soils healthy web of life?

There are ways to bring back or promote the microbial health of the soil. Soil organisms live amongst the plant roots that when established, have a natural ability to provide nutrients to maintain plant health by either using the natural nutrients already in your area, or by using recommended organic compost.

See our list of Healthy Lake Lawn Products on www.plwa.ca

Where can I get help?

Check out the resources at www.plwa.ca or contact a PLWA staff member at info@plwa.ca

How can I get involved in healthy lake-lawn stewardship activities?

The PLWA is looking for volunteers and recent graduates with appropriate backgrounds and reasonable rates to help lot owners with challenges such as how to re-naturalize areas of their lots, how to restore shorelines and other landscaping while recognizing the authorities and incorporating, as possible, the watershed land use recommendations from the work of the Pigeon Lake Watershed Management Plan Committees. See www.plwmp.ca

The PLWA is keen to learn about people who are having fun trying some of these new approaches on their lots; people who will document the “before,” “during” (what was done), and the “after” to encourage others to see a range of possibilities for what they too might do. One of the PLWA Directors is doing this on Silver Beach.