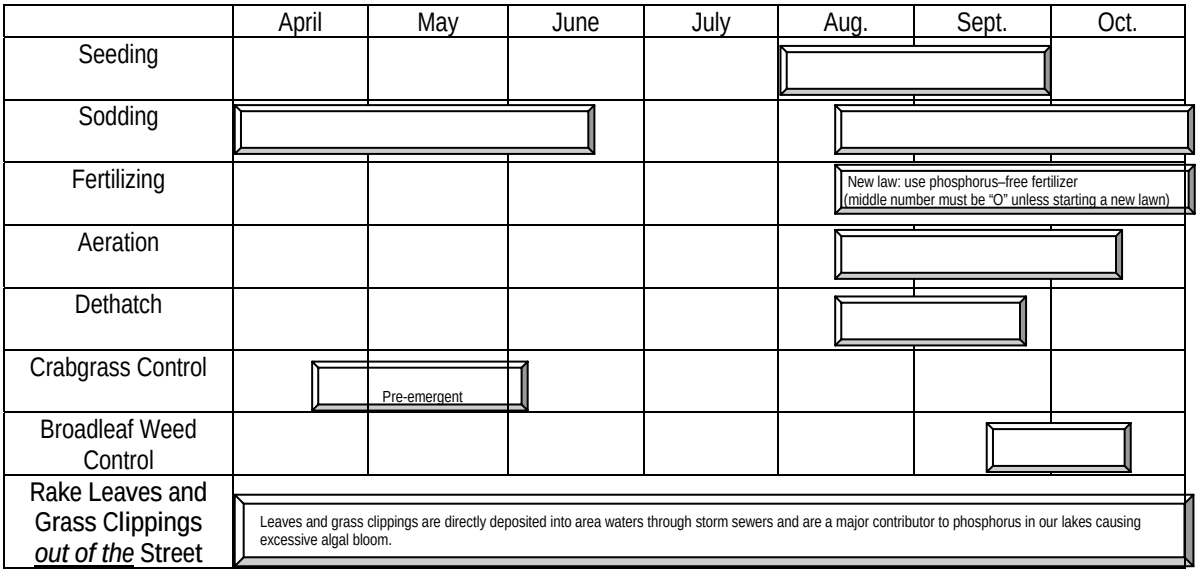
RICE CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT *Dialogue*

Fall is a Great Time to Spruce-Up Your Yard

How you manage your yard impacts water quality. Use the chart below as a guideline. For more information about lawn care, go to www.extension.umn.edu search "Low Input Lawn Care" (LILac).



= best time to do tasks

Lawns help provide for a family's outdoor recreational needs as well as many environmental benefits. Lawns decrease water and wind erosion, and increase water infiltration into the soil which helps recharge groundwater supplies and helps protect surface water quality by reducing storm-water run-off. In addition, roots filter water moving through the soil. The periodic sloughing-off of grass roots, stems and leaves contributes large amounts of organic matter to the soil over time. Finally, healthy lawns and other landscape plantings contribute to improved air quality by acting as traps for dust and other particulate matter.

However, lawns can be harmful to water if they become compacted and water runs-off of them or excessive chemicals are used to maintain them. Lawns can also indirectly contribute to air pollution if gas mowers are used to cut them (see Lawn Trivia at right).

Maintain your lawn properly. Consider purchasing an electric mower or push mower to reduce emissions. If you do not use all of your lawn or you are looking for options to reduce the labor involved in maintaining a healthy lawn, consider restoring part of your lawn to a "no-mow" native planting. Native plants offer all of the benefits mentioned above to an even greater extent because of their extensive roots. Some native plants have roots extending down 15'. Native plantings also attract birds and butterflies. For more information contact Dawn Dubats at RCWD 763-398-7070 x178.

Lawn Trivia

Adapted from Wild Ones Handbook: Today's Lawns

- The mowed lawn aesthetic originated in the late 18th century. The first lawn was designed for the Palace of Versailles.
- Prior to the middle of the 19th century, U.S. homes either had small garden plots or were built very close to the street.
- The middle class did not copy the wealthy lawn aesthetic until after the Civil War.
- 30-60% of urban fresh water is used for watering lawns.
- 67,000,000 pounds of synthetic pesticides are used on lawns in the U.S.
- 580,000,000 gallons of gasoline are used for lawnmowers. A 2-cycle lawnmower pollutes as much in one hour as does driving an average automobile for 350 miles.
- In the U.S., 20,000,000 acres are planted in residential lawns.
- During the active growing season, a healthy 25 square foot lawn will provide enough oxygen for one adult for one day. Green plants, including lawns, through the process of photosynthesis, contribute to a reduction in atmospheric CO2 while giving back O2.