

# Grass isn't cutting it?

## The Case for Rain Gardens



Have an area that is intermittently wet? Consider designing a rain garden! Like any garden, rain gardens offer aesthetic benefits, but are also designed to collect rainwater and slowly filter it into the ground over a day or two. This filters out fertilizers and other pollutants before water enters our streams, and it can reduce flooding and soil erosion after rains by letting water soak in to the ground slowly. Check the next panel for information on the Greater Cincinnati Master Rain Gardener training and a quick guide to installing your own!


## Other lawn plantings


Struggling to grow grass in a specific location? Consider using an alternative ground-cover plant. There are several options to choose from including native and pollinator-friendly species! Native species have added benefits of better survival rates, needing less work and inputs, being better for drainage and being better for wildlife including pollinators. For more information and ideas, refer to the Michigan State Lawn Alternatives guide on the next panel.



# Need more help?

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**SOIL & WATER**  
Conservation from the Ground Up

## Check your waterway



<https://mywaterway.epa.gov>

## Soil Testing Guide



<https://clermont.osu.edu/program-areas/agriculture-and-natural-resources/soil-testing-and-plant-samples>

## What is a Rain Garden?



<https://www.cincyraingarden.org/what-is-a-rain-garden.html>



<https://www.clermontswcd.org/rain-gardens-barrels/>

## Lawn Alternatives



[https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/smart\\_lawns\\_for\\_pollinators](https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/smart_lawns_for_pollinators)



<https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/consider-a-flowering-bee-lawn-to-help-pollinators>



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Lawns can be a major contributor of pollutants that damage our shared streams - **but they don't have to be.**

Making simple management changes can help you minimize pollution while keeping a nice and healthy yard.



# Why Does it Matter?

Nearly 40% of the streams in Ohio and across the U.S. do not meet the primary goals of the Clean Water Act, which is to be “fishable, drinkable or swimmable”.

Lawns are a major contributor of fertilizer and pesticide runoff which can flow into our rivers and streams and impacting their health.

*Unsure the health status of your local stream? Check out the EPA's My Water way tool to find out, link on the back page.*

## Healthy lawn, Healthy Planet

- Healthy grass provides feeding ground for birds who find it a rich source of insects, worms, and other food.
- Thick grass prevents soil erosion, filters contaminants from rainwater, and absorbs many types of airborne pollutants, like dust and soot.
- Grass is highly efficient at converting CO<sub>2</sub> to oxygen which helps clean our air.
- Healthy lawns will out compete most weeds, survive insect attacks and fend off most diseases



*Clean streams =  
safer recreation*



# Steps You Can Take

## Test your soil



Healthy soil is the first step to a healthy lawn. Taking a soil sample is easy, directions can be found at [Clermont, OSU Extension page](#) (link on back page). Your soil test will tell you what your soil needs and takes away the guess work.

## Make informed amendments

Once you get your soil test results, you can start amending your soil with the nutrients it actually needs. Applying more than the recommended fertilizer will make limited improvements while costing you money and increasing the likelihood that some of these fertilizers end up in nearby water bodies.

## Think twice about pesticides

Once the soil has balanced nutrients, your lawn should flourish. If you are still experiencing weed issues at a level that you can't tolerate, try spot spray instead of broadcasting.



## The 4Rs

Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time, and Right Place make up the 4R principles. Make sure you are following the 4Rs before any application. Apply the best chemical for your desired outcome, only apply the amount you need, when the plants actually need it (and not right before a rain!) and only where you need it.

## Don't short yourself when mowing

By mowing your grass higher (2 ½ to 3 ½ in.), your lawn gets the chance to send down deeper roots which will help your lawn survive dry weather with less watering. Longer grass will also better outcompete weeds, reducing the need for herbicides!



## Water wisely

Try to water your grass slowly and deeply by intermittently turning on sprinklers. Soak grass for 10-15 minutes before giving an area a pause to let the water soak in. Some sprinklers will have a soak cycle program or you can set a timer. repeat until the first 6 in. of soil are moist. This method will allow the grass roots to grow deeper which can help reduce drought related stress.

## Keep it clean

Pet waste can negatively impact waterways since it has high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus. It can also burn your lawn - try to clean up pet waste ASAP!



## Reconsider your goals

Many people consider pristine lawns to be a status symbol, but having one can come at a price of your time, money and the environment. A lawn with 15% weeds looks practically weed free to the average observer. Reconsider what level of “imperfection” is reasonable to you!