

Everybody can help keep grass clippings out of our waters

Grass clippings and other yard waste can be beneficial to yards and gardens when made into compost. However when they are improperly disposed or allowed to enter local waterways, they can harm water quality.

What's at risk?

Placing yard waste near storm drains or directly into local lakes, streams, wetlands, and bays is illegal. This practice can:



- Block storm drains and cause flooding.
- Lead to harmful algae blooms from excessive growth of nutrients like nitrogen.
- Smother spawning beds of fish and destroy habitat for other aquatic life.
- Suppress native aquatic plants that support a healthy ecosystem.
- Cause depletion of oxygen and provide an opportunity for non-native plants to grow in their place such as Eurasian Watermilfoil and Brazilian Elodea.
- Lead to sickness in animals and humans if the clippings or yard waste is treated with fertilizers or pesticides.
- Contain high amounts of nutrients and pet waste that lead to water pollution problems.

MORE INFORMATION

To view a list of county litter ordinances in your area, go to:

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/litter/secureORD.html

Protecting Washington Waters

www.ecy.wa.gov/washington_waters/index.html

Natural Yard Care

www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0807064.html

Composting

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/organics/soil.html

Report Environmental Problems to Ecology:

www.ecy.wa.gov/reportaproblem.html

Contact Information

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Special accommodations

If you need this document in a format for the visually impaired, call the Water Quality Program at 360-407-6600.

Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

One person's yard waste may not make a big difference, but when these actions are multiplied by 'everyone,' it turns out to be very harmful to water and fish.

Beneficial uses of yard waste

Making and using compost reduces waste, saving landfill space. It also:

- Builds healthy soil for plants and gardens.
- Saves time and money by reducing the need for water, fertilizer and pesticides.
- Builds rich soil that absorbs run-off and breaks down urban pollutants such as oil, grease, metals, fertilizers and pesticides that harm fish in urban streams or Puget Sound.
- Improves landscape appearance.

Proper disposal of grass clippings and other yard waste

- Place leaves, grass, and other yard waste in a compost bin. Compost can be made within a couple of months. For more information, visit: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/organics/soil.html#tools
- Place in curbside yard waste container(s) provided by your waste hauler.
- Drop off at a yard debris collection site. Contact your local public works or solid waste department for details.
- Mow grass without a lawnmower bag and leave clippings to naturally decompose. Doing so will not produce thatch. Learn more at: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/organics/prevent.html



Help keep our Washington waters clean

It is illegal to dump yard waste into state waters or storm drains. You could face fines from the Department of Ecology or your local jurisdiction.

To learn more about natural yard care, please visit:

www.ecy.wa.gov/washington_waters/yardcare.html