



**CNY STORMWATER COALITION**

# Gardens and Gutters

## *A Central New Yorker's Guide to Managing Stormwater Runoff*

Volume 5 Issue 1

May 2017

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### **Feel-Good Yard and Garden Guidelines**

*As you develop landscaping plans, remember that you can protect water resources by making small changes in how you care for your garden and yard. The horticultural practices found in this newsletter set the stage for a beautiful yard, a healthy environment, and protection of local waterways.*

**Take care when applying herbicides and fertilizers.** Read the labels carefully and always use as directed. Applications to lawns and gardens at the wrong rate or during storm events can cause these products to run off into streams and lakes. Pesticides and fertilizers that make their way into our drinking water or recreational areas can cause health hazards for adults and children, pets and aquatic life. If you suspect that someone has poured contaminants such as herbicides, fertilizer, or other household or yard products into a storm sewer or catch basin, be sure to contact the Onondaga County Stormwater Pollution hotline at 315-435-3157. The hotline is staffed 24-hours a day, seven days a week by the Onondaga County Office of Water Environment Protection.

**Consider the alternatives.** Chemical fertilizers and lawn treatments interfere with natural photosynthesis in plants. Also, soils contain millions of microbes that help to

keep plants healthy but chemical pesticides destroy the microbial populations and reduce soil vitality.

Safe and effective alternatives exist for many of the chemical pesticides and fertilizers that are commonly used on lawns and gardens.

*continued on page 2*



Source: [gardenfuzzgarden.com](http://gardenfuzzgarden.com)

## Feel-Good Yard and Garden Guidelines, *continued*

According to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, switching to chemical-free lawn care treatments promote deep root systems, natural photosynthesis, and stronger growth rates.

**Compost your yard waste.** Two to three inches of bark chips or leaf mulch placed around your plants and trees will add valuable nutrients to the soil and will reduce weed growth in plant beds. However, don't mound the mulch too close to the base of the tree trunks. Tree roots may grow in the mulched area which can eventually girdle and kill the tree.

**Reduce weed growth.** Apply corn gluten (available at most garden stores) to lawns and gardens in the early spring to reduce weed growth. This practice won't kill the weeds but it will prevent new ones from germinating. It is also a natural source of nitrogen. A good way to manage weeds that grow between cracks along walkways and in stony areas is to apply a high acid spray such as vinegar, or pour boiling water over the unwanted plants. Repeat applications may be needed to increase effectiveness.

**Water with care.** Use a broom to sweep your driveway or sidewalk instead of using a hose. The runoff from a hose could flow into nearby storm drains and end up in local lakes, streams, and wetlands. This adds unwanted nutrients and other pollutants to the water, depletes oxygen levels, and promotes algae growth. When irrigating your lawn and garden, don't allow water to flow onto paved surfaces or into nearby storm drains. The best time to water is in the early morning or late in the afternoon.

**Reduce your yard size.** You can also reduce stormwater runoff, save money, and have clearer air by reducing the area of your property that you mow. According to the NYSDEC, operating a gas-powered lawn mower for an hour emits the same amount of pollution as a 20-mile car trip and produces 15 pounds of air pollution in an hour. Electric mowers are cleaner and better for the environment. Taller grasses and less mowing disturbances will also minimize the need for pesticides while providing cover for wildlife and pollinating insects such as fireflies.

Additional information is available at the NYSDEC website  
[www.dec.ny.gov/public/44290.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/44290.html)



Source: [www.proflowers.com/blog/](http://www.proflowers.com/blog/)

## Spring Cleaning Tips to Protect Water Resources



Source: <http://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/hw>

This is the perfect time of year for spring cleaning projects in your lawn and garden shed, basement, and garage. As you tackle these chores, remember to recycle and donate your waste whenever possible. Placing hazardous waste from your home and yard, such as un-used pesticides, fertilizer, paint, old batteries, and out-of-date electronics into your trash is illegal and harmful for the environment. Why should we care? Because when these items end up in landfills, they can leach toxic material into the air, soil, and water which creates health hazards for people and wildlife. 256 million tons of hazardous waste is produced every year in the United State. Now is the perfect time to become smarter about spring cleaning.

Whether you drop off your waste at a transfer station or have it collected by a professional hauler, recycling your household and yard items makes our world a little better each day. Be creative with the re-use of garden products to avoid trips to the land fill. Recycle unused plastic flower pots, consider using broken clay pots for drainage, and donate or sell your old tools and equipment to other gardeners. Never place plastic bags in the blue bins, whether empty or containing recyclables. The best place to recycle bags is at your local grocery store.

The OCRRA website (OCRRA.org) has helpful guidance on how to deal with garden waste and they will also provide free recycling supplies for homes and businesses in Onondaga County.

### Certified Compost from OCRRA

Are you planning to start a new garden or expand an existing one this spring? If so, the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (OCRRA) has two types of Certified Compost ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " and  $\frac{1}{2}$ " screened) that offer many benefits:

- Adds nutrients and organic matter to the soil for improved plant growth
- Controls stormwater runoff
- Helps retain moisture so you don't need to water as frequently
- Naturally suppresses plant diseases so your garden stays healthy
- Reduces the need for chemicals and pesticides so you keep pollutants out of water resources

OCRRA's Certified Composts are made from a blend of local yard waste and food waste, and are registered as 'Pride of NY' products. OCRRA's Certified Composts are tested to meet the US Composting Council's Seal of Testing Assurance standards. This means you always get safe, consistent, weed-free and seed-free compost to nurture your soils and plants. For additional help, contact OCRRA's Recycling Operations Manager at [afordock@ocrra.org](mailto:afordock@ocrra.org)

## A Few Good Reasons To Go Native

Smart landscaping decisions such as plant selection and mulching can provide an attractive yard and garden while creating benefits for the environment, our water supply and public health. Deciding to use native plants is a good place to start because they are naturally adapted to the local climate and soil conditions in Central New York. The use of native plants provides these additional gardening advantages:

### ***Water Conservation***

Once established, most native plants require less water and they often rely on normal rainfall rates in Central New York.

### ***Low Maintenance***

Low maintenance landscaping practices are an added benefit when using native plants because they are already adapted to the local environment. Native plants require little or no fertilizer, little to no pesticides, less pruning, and less of your time.

### ***Minimal Pesticide Use***

Native plants have developed their own defenses against many pests and diseases. Since most pesticides kill indiscriminately, beneficial insects become secondary targets in the fight against pests. Reducing or eliminating pesticide use lets natural pest control take over and keeps garden toxins out of local streams and lakes.

### ***Healthy Ecosystem***

Native plants, birds, insects, and wildlife work together to create a well-balanced ecosystem. Research shows that native wildlife prefers native plants.

Additional information about native plants is available on the [NYS DEC website](http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/). The Native Plants for Gardening and Landscaping Fact Sheet found at this site provides examples of native trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, and flowers that work well in home gardens and landscaping.



Source: <http://www.ecolandscaping.org>



Source: <http://www.greenjaylandscaping.com>

This article was adapted from <http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/>

## Practical Tips for Healthy Lawns

Central New Yorkers are encouraged to practice sustainable lawn care by going phosphorus free, using native plants, and reducing fertilizer use. Simple measures to maintain a healthy lawn will reduce problems with drought, diseases, undesirable weed growth, and pest infestations.

Promote a healthy lawn by following the correct mowing and watering practices. Longer grass (2.5 inches or higher) encourages longer, healthier roots which is an advantage during dry periods. Save time and effort and improve soil health by leaving the grass clippings and composted leaves on the lawn. Water the lawn around once a week and only if needed. Lawns only need about an inch of water per week. Use the sprinkler early in the morning or late in the afternoon to conserve water.

Improve lawn health by using natural materials. Applying a half inch of finished compost provides nitrogen, other trace nutrients, and organic matter to the soil. According to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, you will meet 50% of your lawn's nitrogen requirements by leaving grass clippings on the lawn. Apply the other 50% in the fall by shredding leaves using a mulching lawn mower and leave them on the lawn. More serious nitrogen deficiencies can be corrected with a slow-release, organic sources of nitrogen such as blood meal, cottonseed meal, or fish meal. You'll see better results by applying nutrients when the

soil temperatures are above 65 degrees. If you must use commercially prepared fertilizer, use only phosphorus-free fertilizers. In New York State, most lawns do not need additional phosphorus to thrive. When excess amounts are applied to lawns, the phosphorus (and the cost of the product) washes down the nearest storm drain and into our surface waters.

### **Remember—according to NYS law:**

- Do not apply any fertilizer December 1 and April 1;
- Do not apply fertilizer within 20 feet of any surface water unless there is a vegetative buffer of at least 10 feet;
- Do not broadcast fertilizer onto sidewalks and roads where it can run-off into storm drains or nearby waterways.



Source: <http://abundancenc.org/grassroots-sustenance/>

## Sustainable Lawn Care to Protect Waterbodies



Photo source: A. Saltman

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner, Basil Seggos, urges residents to 'look for the zero' and buy phosphorus-free fertilizer this spring. By eliminating phosphorus and reducing pesticide use on lawns, New Yorkers can improve water quality. New York's nutrient runoff law prohibits the use of phosphorus lawn fertilizers unless a new lawn is being established or a soil test shows that the lawn does not have enough phosphorus. Generally, only newly established lawns or those with poor soil need phosphorus. Phosphorus applied to lawns that don't need it can cause water pollution. Regardless of the location, excess phosphorus from lawns can wash off and pollute lakes and streams, harming fish and ruining boating and swimming.

Consumers should review bag labels for phosphorus content when shopping for fertilizer. Fertilizer labels have three bold numbers. The number in the middle is the percentage of phosphorus in the product, such as: 22-0-15. The state's law requires

retailers to display phosphorus fertilizer separately from phosphorus-free fertilizer and post signs notifying customers of the terms of the law.

NYS DEC posted a new video ("Look for Zero Phosphorus Lawn Fertilizer") to its YouTube channel that shows how phosphorus and other chemicals can run off lawns and enter our waterways. For more information, visit [DEC's Lawn Fertilizer web page](#). The nutrient runoff law does not affect agricultural fertilizer or fertilizer for gardens.



Photo source: A. Saltman

## Responsible Pet Care Benefits Everyone

Please remember to clean up after your dog. Scooping your dog's waste isn't just a courtesy for those walking behind you; it also protects water resources.

When rain or snowmelt flows over land surfaces, pet waste, paper, plastic bottles, leaves and other litter left on the street is washed down storm drains and into local lakes and streams. Stormwater runoff can contain pathogens, nutrients, and toxic pollutants that can harm people, pets and wildlife. Unlike sanitary sewer systems which flow to a wastewater treatment plant, storm sewers flow directly to waterways without any treatment. Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen can make lakes and streams unsafe for drinking and swimming by promoting the growth of unwanted algae and rooted aquatic plants. Pet waste that is left on the ground contains bacteria and pathogens that can persist in the soil. This has the potential to impact children or gardeners that come in contact with it.

Always bring a plastic bag with you when you walk your dog. Use the bag like a glove, pick up the pet waste, turn the bag inside out, and seal it. Then place the bag in the trash or flush the un-bagged waste down the toilet. Never place the dog waste (bagged or un-bagged) in the storm drain! Storm drains lead directly to streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands.

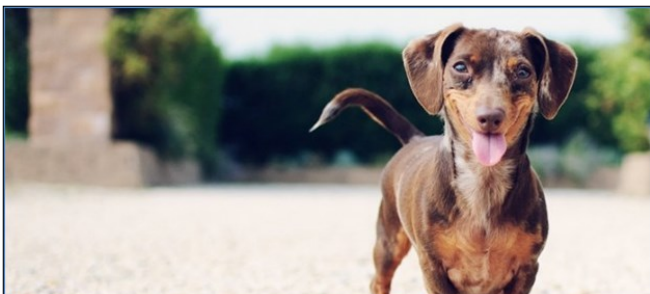


Photo source: <http://www.lastormwater.org/>

### Take a Leading Role to Control Stormwater Pollution

*Everyone's help is needed to keep local waters clean. Here are a few examples of stormwater and the impacts that it has on people and wildlife.*

- Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen can promote the growth of algae and deplete oxygen in the water. High nutrient levels can be harmful to people and aquatic life.
- Bacteria from animal wastes and illicit connections to separate storm sewer systems can make lakes unsafe for recreation and fisheries.
- Oil and grease from gas powered lawn equipment causes sheen and odor and makes transfer of oxygen difficult for aquatic organisms.
- Sediment from landscaping projects clouds waterways and interferes with lake and stream habitat.
- Careless application of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers affect the health of living organisms and cause ecosystem imbalances.
- Litter damages aquatic life, introduces chemical pollution, and diminishes the beauty of our waterways.

# Lyme Disease and Other Diseases Carried by Ticks

## It's important for you and your family to be tick free!

Ticks can spread disease. Not all ticks can cause disease and not all bites will make you sick, but as these diseases become more common it's important to learn how to prevent a bite, how to remove a tick and what to do if you think you could have a tick-borne disease.

Lyme disease is the most common disease spread by ticks in New York but there are other serious diseases spread by ticks. And like Lyme, the other diseases will begin to spread to other regions across the state.

## Protect Against and Prevent Disease

Deer ticks live in shady, moist areas at ground level. They will cling to tall grass, brush and shrubs, usually no more than 18-24 inches off the ground. They also live in lawns and gardens, especially at the edges of woods and around old stone walls.

Once a tick gets on the skin, it generally climbs upward until it reaches a protected area.

In tick-infested areas, your best protection is to avoid contact with soil, leaf litter and vegetation. However, if you garden, hike, camp, hunt, work or otherwise spend time in the outdoors, you can still protect yourself:

- Wear light-colored clothing with a tight weave to spot ticks easily.
- Wear enclosed shoes, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and shirt into pants.
- Check clothes and any exposed skin frequently for ticks while outdoors.
- Consider using insect repellent.
- Stay on cleared, well-traveled trails. Walk in the center of trails. Avoid dense woods and bushy areas.
- Avoid sitting directly on the ground or on stone walls.
- Keep long hair tied back, especially when gardening.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after going indoors (preferably within two hours) to wash off and more easily find ticks that may be on you.

Do a final, full-body tick check at the end of the day (also check children and pets), and remove ticks promptly

**Dress to Repel: Wear light-colored clothes and tuck pants into socks and shirt into pants.**

**Insect repellents:** If you use insect repellents, follow label directions and apply repellent carefully. [Tick and Insect Repellent: Deciding on their Use](#)

**Remove a tick as soon as you find one on you:** Removing a tick as soon as you find it will reduce the likelihood of contracting any disease that a tick may be carrying.

**[Lyme Disease Alert: How To Remove A Tick](#)**

**When to call a doctor after a tick bite:** If you develop a rash or flu-like symptoms, contact your health care provider immediately. Although not routinely recommended, taking antibiotics within three days after a tick bite may be beneficial for some persons. This would apply to deer tick bites that occurred in areas where Lyme disease is common and there is evidence that the tick fed for more than one day. In cases like this you should discuss the possibilities with your doctor or licensed health care provider.

## Create a Tick-Safe Zone Through Landscaping

You can make your yard less attractive to ticks depending on how you landscape. Here are some simple landscaping techniques that can help reduce tick populations:

- Clear tall grasses and brush around homes and at the edge of lawns.
- Place a 3-ft wide barrier of wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas and around patios and play equipment. This will restrict tick migration into recreational areas.
- Mow the lawn frequently and keep leaves raked.
- Stack wood neatly and in a dry area (discourages rodents that ticks feed on).
- Keep playground equipment, decks, and patios away from yard edges and trees and place them in a sunny location, if possible.
- Remove any old furniture, mattresses, or trash from the yard that may give ticks a place to hide.

Source: [NYS Department of Health](#)



## CNY STORMWATER COALITION

The CNY Stormwater Coalition was formalized in 2011 in order to establish a regional approach for stormwater management and water resource protection. The Coalition is made up of 29 local governments and the NYS Fairgrounds. Each member operates a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). Through the Coalition, members are working together to meet regulatory requirements while improving water quality.



### CNY STORMWATER COALITION MEMBERS

Baldwinsville Village	Manlius Town
Camillus Town	Manlius Village
Camillus Village	Marcellus Town
Central Square Village	Marcellus Village
Cicero Town	Minoa Village
Clay Town	North Syracuse Village
DeWitt Town	Onondaga County
East Syracuse Village	Onondaga Town
Fayetteville Village	Phoenix Village
Geddes Town	Pompey Town
Hastings Town	Salina Town
LaFayette Town	Solvay Village
Liverpool Village	Syracuse City
Lysander Town	Van Buren Town
	NYS Fairgrounds

The CNY Stormwater Coalition meets quarterly throughout the year. All meetings are open to the public. Check the Coalition's website for the times, dates, and additional meeting details.

The CNY Stormwater Coalition is staffed and coordinated by the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board. For additional information, visit the CNY Stormwater website

[www.cnyrpd.org/stormwater](http://www.cnyrpd.org/stormwater)



Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**May 5 and 6, 2017 - I Love My Park Day Events** will be held at Green Lakes State Park and other parks in Central New York. All ages welcome! More than 120 state parks and historic sites are participating. Join your friends, family and neighbors and sign up to volunteer for activities such as beach clean-ups, trail restoration, and tree and flower plantings. Register at <http://www.ptny.org/events/i-love-my-park-day>.

**May 20, 2017 - Safely Dispose of Old Electronics.** Senator Valesky is sponsoring a free recycling event from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the DMV parking lot, 5801 East Taft Road in North Syracuse. Items that will be accepted include computers, printers, scanners, copiers, fax machines, televisions, cell phones, IT and networking equipment, monitors, MP3 players, PDAs, tablets, and ink and toner cartridges. Visit <https://www.sunning.com/> for additional information.

**May 20, 2017 - Master Gardener Plant Sale** from 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM provided by the Master Gardeners of Onondaga County at Beaver Lake Nature Center, 8477 East Mud Lake Road in Baldwinsville. They will be selling locally grown perennials, annuals, herbs, ferns, and vegetables. Additional information is available at [ksb96@cornell.edu](mailto:ksb96@cornell.edu) or (315) 424-9485 x236.



CNY Stormwater Coalition



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