



Long Island depends on clean water. We all need water to drink, and clean water is also essential to support our marine businesses and tourism, as well as our own boating, swimming and fishing.

Lately there has been a lot of news about Long Island's water being contaminated by excess nitrogen. While much of that nitrogen comes from human waste, a significant percentage comes from the fertilizers we spread on our lawns.

Many of the most popular lawn fertilizers are highly water-soluble, which means they dissolve quickly with moisture. And because they dissolve quickly, they can also leach through our sandy soils into our groundwater, or run off with stormwater into our inlets, bays and streams.

Slow release, low-nitrogen fertilizers are much healthier for your grass plants, and won't contaminate our water. They're available at all big box stores and garden centers, and you'll need less of them to fertilize your lawn

So this year, why not join the growing number of Long Island families that are choosing to practice responsible lawn care with products that won't harm our water?

**For more information please visit  
[www.LIWater.org](http://www.LIWater.org).**

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***Thank you, from your friends and neighbors  
working to protect Long Island's water:***

*Operation Blue Earth  
Save the Great South Bay  
The Perfect Earth Project  
Grassroots Environmental Education  
Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
Peconic Green Growth  
Operation Splash  
Seatuck Environmental Center  
Sustainability Institute at Molloy  
Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor  
Group for the East End  
Neighborhood Network*

*Water for Long Island  
North Shore Audubon  
CRESLI  
Defend H2O  
Save the Sound  
Concerned Citizens of Montauk  
North Fork Audubon  
North Fork Environmental Council  
Accabonac Protection Committee  
The Pine Barrens Society  
North Shore Land Alliance  
The Open Space Council*

*Keeping our lawns green, our kids  
and pets safe and our water clean!*



## **The Long Island Lawn Care Guide**



Long Island is a fragile ecosystem and our drinking water comes from underground aquifers. Whatever we put on our lawns eventually ends up in our aquifers or runs off into our surrounding waters.

***We need to care for our lawns with this in mind!***

# **Here on Long Island, we need to care for our lawns a little differently...**

*Using low-nitrogen fertilizers and avoiding chemical pesticides helps protect our fragile drinking and surface waters.*

- 1. Avoid High-Nitrogen Fertilizers.** Nitrogen is the enemy of clean water. High nitrogen fertilizers leach into our ground and surface waters, causing algal blooms and fish kills.

*Do not apply (and do not permit your lawn service to apply) any lawn fertilizer product with more than 12% nitrogen.* That's the first of the three numbers on the fertilizer bag. And check the label to be sure that at least 50% of the nitrogen is water insoluble.

## **2. Avoid Chemical Pesticides.**

Pesticides kill insects and weeds, but they are also dangerous for kids and pets, toxic to wildlife and aquatic organisms and contaminate our water. Healthy soil biology and dense grass is your best protection against pests and weeds.

- 3. Feed The Microbes** – Leave grass clippings on the lawn whenever possible. The microbes in the soil will turn them into nitrogen and reduce the amount of fertilizer needed by about one half.

- 4. Overseed** – A thick turf is the best way to control weeds. Seed in late summer or early fall with a mixture of indigenous grasses. Core or slice aeration before seeding will improve germination and help alleviate compaction. A bucket of compost and grass seed mixture is the best solution for filling in bare spots.



- 5. Mow High** – Cut grass at 3-3½ inches, allowing it to shade its roots, conserve moisture and prevent weeds from germinating. Keep mower blades sharp so they do not tear the grass, making it vulnerable to disease. Rotate mowing patterns.

- 6. Water Less, But Longer** – Once-a-week watering in the early morning for several hours is the best method, subject to any water restrictions in your area. Take into consideration rainfall and the type of soil you have. Sandy soils like those on Long Island generally need more water than clay-based soils, but too much water can cause fungal problems to develop.

- 7. Avoid Chemical Herbicides** – If you really don't like dandelions, dig them out! You can also use an organic corn gluten product that prevents crab grass and other broadleaf weed seeds from germinating. It must be applied to established (not newly seeded) lawns early in the spring. For spot weed control on driveways and walkways, use a vinegar or vinegar/botanical oil combination product. Iron-based weed control products are also effective for lawns.

- 8. Control Pests Without Toxic Chemicals** – Common pests (grubs, sod webworms, chinch bugs) can be controlled with applications of beneficial nematodes. Milky spore powder is another effective control for Japanese beetle grubs. Most fungal diseases can be prevented with several light applications of compost or liquid compost tea. Beneficial organisms in healthy soil will out-compete unwanted pests.

*For a complete listing of lawn care products that help protect our water, please visit [www.LIWater.org](http://www.LIWater.org)*