

Landscaping Activities and Vegetation Management

This broad activity encompasses all aspects of landscaping and vegetation management, from small-scale yard maintenance to large-scale commercial landscaping businesses and vegetation management programs. It includes vegetation removal, herbicide and insecticide application, fertilizer application, watering, and other gardening and lawn care practices. Stormwater runoff from areas that have been subject to pesticide or fertilizer application or extensive clearing, grading or cutting may be contaminated with pesticides and other toxic organic compounds, metals, oils, suspended solids, nutrients from fertilizer, and coliform bacteria, and may cause biochemical oxygen demand.

While not required, consider using the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach for pest control. IPM is an approach that uses an array of methods to manage pest damage with the least possible hazard to people and the environment. IPM uses a combination of biological, cultural, and physical practices that can significantly reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides.

See Activity Sheets A-5, “Storage of Pesticides and Fertilizers” and A-3, “Storage of Liquid Materials in Portable Containers.” Landscaping activities related to golf courses should refer to King County’s Golf Course BMP Manual (see Chapter 6 of this manual for more information).

Note: The term pesticide includes insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, rodenticides, etc.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The following BMPs, or equivalent measures, methods, or practices are required if you are engaged in landscaping activities:

- 1** Do not apply any pesticides directly to surface waters, unless the application is approved and permitted by the Washington State Department of Ecology.
- 2** Mix pesticides so that spilled material will not be washed to surface waters, the storm drainage system, or onto the ground. Clean up any spills immediately. Ensure employees are trained on the proper use of pesticides and in pesticide application techniques to prevent pollution. Washington pesticide law requires most businesses that commercially apply pesticides to the property of another to be licensed as a Commercial Applicator.
- 3** Follow manufacturers’ recommendations and label directions. Pesticides and fertilizers must never be applied if it is raining or about to rain. Do not apply pesticides within 100 feet of surface waters such as lakes, ponds, wetlands, and streams. This also can include stormwater conveyance ditches. Remove weeds/vegetation in stormwater ditches by hand or other

mechanical means. Chemicals should be used as a last resort.

- 4 Dispose of grass clippings, leaves, branches, sticks, or other collected vegetation, by recycling, composting, or burning (if allowed). Do not dispose of collected vegetation into storm drainage systems, conveyance ditches, stormwater ponds, or surface water.
- 5 Use mulch or other erosion control measures when soils are exposed for more than one week during the dry season or two days during the rainy season.
- 6 Implement water conservation practices to assure sprinkler systems do not “overspray” vegetated areas and discharge to hard surfaces such as sidewalks, driveways, and parking lots. Adjust sprinkler heads accordingly. Minimize water use so runoff does not occur or enter storm drainage systems. Use approaches to reduce water use such as those described in the Natural Yardcare program.
<http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/naturalyardcare/watering.asp>

The King County Noxious Weed Control Program provides best management practices for the removal of typical noxious weeds such as blackberry and purple loosestrife. Call 206-296-0290 or see <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsandplants/noxious-weeds/weed-control-practices.aspx> for more information.

ADDITIONAL BMPs

The following BMPs are optional unless the above minimum required BMPs do not provide adequate source control:

- 1 Integrated pest management (IPM), a comprehensive approach to the use of pesticides is the most effective BMP measure that can be taken for herbicide, insecticide, and fungicide use.
☞ See BMP Info Sheet 6 in Chapter 5 for information on IPM.
- 2 Fertilizers should be worked into the soil rather than dumped or broadcast onto the surface. Determine the proper fertilizer application for the types of soil and vegetation involved. Soil should be tested for the correct fertilizer usage.
- 3 Use mechanical methods of vegetation removal rather than applying herbicides.



An effective measure that can be taken to reduce pesticide use, excessive watering, and removal of dead vegetation involves careful soil mixing and layering prior to planting. A topsoil mix or composted organic material should be rototilled into the soil to create a transition layer that encourages deeper root systems and drought-resistant plants. This practice can improve the health of planted vegetation, resulting in better disease resistance and reduced watering requirements.



Use native plants in landscaping. Native plants do not require extensive fertilizer or pesticide applications.

For more information or assistance in implementing these best management practices, contact the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks Water and Land Resources Division at 206-296-1900.

Reader Note: The above requirements are the minimum required BMPs. If these BMPs fail to prevent discharges to the storm drainage system, you will be asked to take additional measures to correct the continued pollution discharges.