
R-5: Residential Gardening, Lawn Care, Irrigation and Fertilizer Application

Many pollutants can enter stormwater systems, groundwater, and water bodies as a result of typical lawn and gardening work. Runoff contaminated by pesticides and fertilizers can severely degrade streams and lakes and adversely affect fish and other aquatic life.

Disposal of grass clippings and other vegetation into water bodies leads to decreased oxygen levels that can be lethal to fish and other aquatic life. In addition, disposal of leaf litter and other debris to the storm drain system can clog drainage pipes, leading to street flooding and increased maintenance costs. Some gardening chemicals are also harmful to children and pets.

Potential pollutants can include but are not limited to fecal coliform bacteria, metals, nutrients, oil and grease, oxygen demanding substances, PCBs, and sediment.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are required by King County Water Quality Code (KCC 9.12). If the BMPs included here are not enough to prevent contamination of stormwater, you will be required to take additional measures.

Required BMPs

- Never apply herbicides, insecticides, rodenticides, or fungicides near water or when it is raining.
- Manually or mechanically remove weeds and other pests rather than using pesticides near water.
- Store all bags, piles, and containers of fertilizers and pesticides in a covered location such as a garden shed.
- Do not sweep, blow, or dump grass clippings, leaves, or twigs into any street, drainage ditch, storm drain, or surface waters. Instead, collect and either compost it or dispose as yard waste.
- Store piles of erodible materials, such as topsoil, on lawns or other pervious areas. If these materials are stored on impervious areas such as driveways, cover them with a tarp so they are not washed into storm drains or ditches.
- Control lawn and garden watering so that no runoff leaves your property. Check automatic sprinkler systems to ensure there is no overspray to driveways and sidewalks that drain to storm drainage systems.

Tips

- Compost your yard waste, or use it as mulch in your yard or garden. Contact your local solid waste utility to see if yard waste pickup service is available. See <http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/garbage-recycling/yardwaste.asp>.
- Use as little pesticide as possible and always follow the label directions for application. Try pest control measures that do not require chemicals first.

- Learn about alternatives to chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Contact the King County Hazardous Waste Management Program at 206-296-4692, or visit <http://www.hazwastehelp.org> and the Garden Hotline at <https://gardenhotline.org/>
- Avoid planting species on the Noxious Weeds list. For assistance or questions contact King County's Noxious Weed Program at 206-296-1900 or visit <https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/animals-and-plants/noxious-weeds.aspx>.
- For additional information on pesticides and fertilizers see activity sheet [A-5: Storage and Use of Pesticides and Fertilizers](#).
- For additional information on vegetation management and irrigation see activity sheet [A-26: Landscaping Activities, Vegetation Management, and Irrigation](#).

For more information or assistance contact the King County Stormwater Services at 206-477-4811 and visit kingcounty.gov/stormwater.