

Spring is just around the corner, and soon Prior Lake Residents will mark the start of a new season of lawn maintenance and summer landscaping projects! This article covers yard maintenance issues and suggests some nature-friendly methods to consider this year.

Water conservation:

When is Lawn Irrigation Restricted?

No lawn irrigation is allowed between the hours of 11am and 5pm. Lawn irrigation follows an even/odd schedule. If your house address ends in a 0,2,4,6 or 8 you may water only on even numbered days. If your house address ends in a 1,3,5,7 or 9 you may water only on odd numbered days.

Why is lawn irrigation restricted?

The 11am to 5pm restriction is put in place to prevent wasteful use of water. When applied in the heat of the day, most irrigation water simply evaporates from the soil rather than soaking deep and being used by plants. The even / odd restrictions are in place to minimize the peak demand of water from the entire city system. To serve demand without the even / odd system the City would need to spend more to develop more wells and water towers.

How can I conserve water?

A few suggestions to conserve water include:

- Keep grass 3-5 inches in height, short grass requires more water because its root structure is shallower.
- Consider planting more shade trees, evaporation is less in shaded areas.
- Direct runoff water from gutter downspouts to lawn areas. This runoff from roofs can be used to increase soil moisture and lessen the need for irrigation.

Water Quality:

What can be done to increase lake or pond water clarity?

In the same way homeowner fertilize their lawns and fields to create a lush green lawn, fertility in water bodies will cause similar effects in the form of algae blooms and floating mats of vegetation. Because green is not the color we hope for our lakes, efforts are taken to reduce the amount of fertility the waters receive. These efforts include; sweeping dirt and leaves from streets, preventing and controlling soil erosion, and monitoring construction site erosion.

Three ideas to help:

1. Compost lawn clippings, leaves, and pet waste, never allow them to wash from the street into the drain.
2. Get your lawn tested prior to applying fertilizer. Soil test information can be found at <http://soiltest.coafes.umn.edu/>
3. Never used banned phosphorus fertilizer unless a soil test recommends it.
4. Leave a buffer of natural vegetation between surface water and your manicured lawn.

Soil Stability:

Stable soils help prevent erosion from dirtying downstream waters. In natural areas, promote a diverse vegetation of native plants by planting prairie grasses and wildflowers.

For areas with steep slopes, retaining walls or long grass cover can help stabilize soils. Proper drainage directed away from the slopes, will help prevent erosion problems.

In all cases, a healthy root system will be the best defense against soil erosion.

Lake shore

How can I correct erosion along my lake shore?

Shoreline stabilization is a priority of the Prior Lake Spring Lake Watershed District. Cost share grants are available from the District as well as technical assistance to help design a successful shore land restoration and stabilization.