

Important Information About Keeping Grass Off City Streets

PROPER STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

Many homeowners and landscape companies are guilty of sweeping or blowing yard waste, like grass clipping and leaves, into the street. Storm drains, inlets, ditches, streets and other parts of the storm drainage system are not part of the sanitary or sewer system. Sanitary sewer waters are treated, storm sewer waters are not.

In the City of Pewaukee, it is illegal to dump, sweep, rake or blow grass clippings and yard waste into drains, ditches and streets. When it rains, yard waste left in the streets, on sidewalks or on driveways will wash into nearby storm drains. These drains become clogged and often lead to flooding in streets and nearby properties. Expensive equipment and labor are often required to remove clogs in drainage systems and ditches.

While grass clippings, tree leaves and other yard waste are organic, they still pollute our local waterways. When yard waste washes into storm water drains it eventually breaks down or decomposes and discharges directly to the creeks, rivers, and lakes where you and your children may swim. Yard waste also depletes the oxygen in the water. Aquatic life, such as fish, need oxygen to survive. If oxygen levels become too low, fish and other aquatic life cannot survive.



PREVENT SAFETY HAZARDS

Grass clippings on roadways not only clog storm drains, they can be a real safety hazard for motorcyclists and bicyclists. The tiny blades of grass are comprised of 85% water and are very slippery. Wet or dry, when blown onto the streets or highways, the grass clippings can come between a motorcycle's tires and the pavement and cause a loss of traction. The simple act of blowing your grass clippings back into your yard could help prevent a serious accident, or worse.

HOW TO HANDLE YARD WASTE

Leave it on the lawn, use it to improve your landscape, or compost your yard waste. Grass clippings left on the lawn do not contribute to thatch, but return valuable nutrients to the soil. This may reduce your need for chemical fertilizers. During the fall, a light covering of leaves can be mowed without the catch-bag, leaving the shredded leaves on the lawn. And, as leaves contain 50-80% of the nutrients that a plant extracts from the soil and air during the growing season, you are taking advantage of a natural resource.

Mulching is a simple and effective way to recycle leaves and improve your landscape. It reduces evaporation from the soil surface, inhibits weed growth, moderates soil temperatures, keeps soil from eroding and crusting, and prevents soil compaction. As organic mulch decomposes, valuable nutrients are released for use by plants.

Composting is an easy way to recycle yard waste. Compost is a dark, crumbly and earthy-smelling form of organic matter that has gone through a natural decomposition process. It can be used to enrich the soil by adding nutrients, loosen tight, heavy soils, help sandy soils retain moisture and nutrients, add to potting soils for container grown plants, and mulch around landscape plants and gardens.

HOW CAN I HELP?

In the City of Pewaukee, blowing or sweeping yard waste into the streets, sidewalks, driveways or storm drains is illegal. If caught, a citation may be issued for violating City Ordinance 19.20b. Please ensure your lawn maintenance contractor operates in accordance with City code.

If you see a clogged ditch or storm drain, or illegal dumping, please report it to the City of Pewaukee, Department of Public Works at (262) 691-0804.