



Lawn and Dock Care: Protecting Norris Lake

Lawns next to lakes, ponds, rivers, or other water places are special and need extra care. They help clean the water and stop dirt from washing away, but things you do to take care of the grass can also affect the water. Here are some things to think about and do to make sure the water stays clean:

Fertilizer Tips:

- Make a 5 to 10-foot buffer strip adjacent to any water body and apply minimal or no fertilizer to this strip.
- Use a zero-phosphorus fertilizer if phosphorus levels are adequate.
- Use 1 to 4 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year, depending on the quality of lawn you desire.
- Use no more than 1 pound per 1,000 square feet of nitrogen per application.
- Use lower nitrogen amounts for shaded areas.
- At least 25 to 35 percent of the nitrogen should be in a slow-release form. Organic-based nitrogen fertilizers will provide slow release. Other types of fertilizers can be formulated to provide slow release of nitrogen. Check the labels.
- Don't apply fertilizer in the spring until 3 weeks after lawn green-up.
- A general fertilizer application sequence for high quality lawns would be May, early July, September, and late October/early November.
- Pay attention to the labels! This is no place for the "if 5 pounds is good, 10 pounds would be better" approach.
- Never let fertilizer land directly in the water. Use a buffer strip adjacent to the water to safeguard your application. Use a drop spreader to control application near the buffer strip.
- Keep fertilizers off any concrete or asphalt surfaces. Rainwater could carry these materials into a drainage system that connects to surface water. Sweep or blow fertilizers off the hard surfaces back onto the lawn.
- Don't fill the spreader near the water. An accidental spill at this time could cause considerable impact.
- If you use a professional lawn care service, make certain its technicians are familiar with water protection techniques.

Mowing Tips:

- Make a 10 to 15-foot riparian buffer zone. This is an area immediately adjacent to a waterbody that you intentionally manage by growing native grasses, trees, and shrubs. Let this area grow taller than the rest of your yard.
- Don't collect your grass clippings! Leaving the grass clippings lets the nutrients cycle back into the soil, reducing the need for fertilizers.
- Sharp mower blades provide a better cut and healthier turf stand. Dull blades tear the grass and increase the chances of disease or infection in your lawn.

Lawn Care Services:

- Discuss your lawn care needs with your provider. Providers can and should accommodate all the tips provided above. It is especially important to request phosphate-free fertilizer and leave a riparian buffer zone alone.
- Currently, there are no lawn care services near Norris Lake that advertise using these best practices.

Recommended Fertilizers: (available at most hardware stores including Lowes and Home Depot)

- **Good**
 - GreenView Lawn Food (22-0-4) ~\$1.05/lbs.
- **Better**
 - Old Farmer's Almanac (10-0-2) ~\$1.10/lbs.
 - ProPEAT Lawn Fertilizer (10-0-10) ~\$1.60/lbs.
- **Best**
 - Purely Organic Dry Lawn Food Fertilizer (10-0-2) ~\$1.30/lbs.
 - Feather Meal
 - Natural Alternative All Purpose Plant Food (5-0-5) ~ \$3.80/lbs.
 - Your own compost!

Yard Pests:

- Did you know that ants are beneficial to your lawn and garden? It's ok to leave some ant colonies alone if they are out of the way and not in your outdoor living spaces.
- If you must remove, then here are some natural ways we recommend:
 - Diatomaceous Earth (DE): made of tiny fossils left behind by microscopic organisms called diatoms. Those fossils are too small to hurt humans, but they're deadly to ants. DE particles slice through ants' exoskeletons, which dehydrates and eventually kills them.
 - Baking soda: baking soda and baby powder both suffocate ants by clogging their spiracles, which are pores in their exoskeleton that they need to breathe. If ingested, baking soda will create a chemical reaction inside the ant that kills it.
 - Boiling water: Boiling water burns ants and kills them on contact. It also destroys the inside of the nest, so any ants that survive will likely move on to somewhere new.
 - Essential oils: Some (but not all) essential oils mask the scent trails ants use to navigate, which confuses them and sends them in the opposite direction ((peppermint, cedarwood, tea tree, vetiver, orange, cinnamon)

Dock Pest Tips:

- Mechanically remove spiders and mud-dauber wasps and with a long-handled brush, making sure that you are removing the egg sacks and nests regularly.
- Use essential oils to deter pests from getting established on your dock. These oils have a strong scent that interferes with how insects navigate and communicate with each other. It repels spiders, wasps, hornets, boxelders, Lady Asian Beetles, and several other nuisance insects.
 - Fill a spray bottle with water and 15 drops of essential oil (peppermint, cedarwood, tea tree, vetiver, orange, cinnamon)
 - Spray your dock, especially where spiders might build a web.
- If these methods aren't cutting it, you may need to contact a professional.
 - Norris Lake Pressure Washing (865) 498-9121 advertises an "All-Natural Marine Safe Pest Control and dock cleaning"

More Questions?

Contact the East Tennessee Environmental Educators
(865) 275-5086
ETEEcontact@gmail.com



Keep Norris Blue Questionnaire

Protecting Norris Lake starts right in your backyard! You can help prevent algal blooms and fish kills by minimizing nutrient pollution and stormwater runoff from their yards and restoring ecosystem functions with native plants.

Good Practices:

- ☐ Fertilizer-Free: June-September
- ☐ Use only 50% or more slow-release nitrogen fertilizer (if you fertilize at all)
- ☐ No phosphorus without soil test showing need.
- ☐ Fertilizer-free buffers along water and curbs
- ☐ Regularly pick up pet waste
- ☐ Keep lawn clippings out of storm drains and water.
- ☐ Avoid washing your car in the driveway when you can.
- ☐ Minimal pesticide application (spot treat only)

Better Practices:

- ☐ 30% or more non-turf, permeable yard (gardens, groundcover, mulch/gravel, etc.)
- ☐ Maintenance-free buffers along water and curbs
- ☐ Use of sustainable mulch (pine byproducts, melaleuca, eucalyptus, cut stump, etc.)
- ☐ Drain spouts pointed at permeable surfaces.
- ☐ Rain barrels used for water capture.
- ☐ Efficient/minimal or no irrigation

Best Practices:

- ☐ No Category 1 exotic invasive plants
- ☐ 50% or more native plants
- ☐ 10 or more native plant species
- ☐ Flowering or fruiting plants for wildlife
- ☐ Living shorelines

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