



February 1, 2012 Surface Water Management Manual Handouts:  
Volume 4, Chapter 4 of the Tacoma Stormwater Manual

#### 4.4.6 BMP A306: Landscaping and Lawn/Vegetation Management

**Description of Pollutant Sources:** Landscaping can include grading, soil transfer, vegetation removal, pesticide and fertilizer application, and watering. Stormwater contaminants include toxic organic compounds, heavy metals, oils, total suspended solids, coliform bacteria, fertilizers, and pesticides.

Lawn and vegetation management can include control of objectionable weeds, insects, mold, bacteria, and other pests with chemical pesticides and is conducted commercially at commercial, industrial, and residential sites. Examples include weed control on golf course lawns, access roads, and utility corridors and during landscaping; sap stain and insect control on lumber and logs; rooftop moss removal; killing nuisance rodents; fungicide application to patio decks; and residential lawn/plant care. Toxic pesticides such as pentachlorophenol, carbamates, and organometallics can be released to the environment by leaching and dripping from treated parts, container leaks, product misuse, and outside storage of pesticide contaminated materials and equipment. Poor management of the vegetation, poor application of pesticides or fertilizers, and non-targeted irrigation water or overwatering can cause appreciable stormwater contamination.

##### Required BMPs for Landscaping:

- Install engineered soil/landscape systems to improve the infiltration and regulation of stormwater in landscaped areas. Apply Soil Quality and Depth BMPs as required per Minimum Requirement #5.
- Do not dispose of collected vegetation into wetlands, waterways or storm drainage systems.

##### Recommended BMPs for Landscaping:

- Conduct mulch-mowing whenever practicable.
- Dispose of grass clippings, leaves, sticks, or other collected vegetation by composting, if feasible.
- Collect all clippings, leaves, bark, and trimmings blown onto the sidewalk or street. Don't leave this material in the gutter or where it can be washed into the storm drainage system.
- 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.
- If oil or other chemicals are handled, store and maintain appropriate oil and chemical spill cleanup materials in readily accessible locations. Ensure that employees are familiar with proper spill cleanup procedures.



- Till fertilizers into the soil rather than dumping or broadcasting onto the surface. Determine the proper fertilizer application for the types of soil and vegetation encountered.
- Till a topsoil mix or composted organic material into the soil to create a well-mixed transition layer that encourages deeper root systems and drought-resistant plants.
- Use manual and/or mechanical methods of vegetation removal rather than applying herbicides, where practical.
- Target irrigation water on vegetated areas and limit irrigation time to reduce the potential of carrying fertilizers and pesticides off-site.

### **Required BMPs for the Use of Pesticides:**

- Develop and implement an integrated pest management system (IPM) (See BMP S108) and use pesticides only as a last resort.
- Implement a pesticide-use plan and include at a minimum: a list of selected pesticides and their specific uses; brands, formulations, application methods, and quantities to be used; equipment use and maintenance procedures; safety, storage, and disposal methods; and monitoring, record keeping, and public notice procedures. All procedures shall conform to the requirements of Chapter 17.21 RCW and Chapter 16-228 WAC (Appendix 4 – D.R.7).
- Choose the least toxic pesticide available that is capable of reducing the infestation to acceptable levels. The pesticide should readily degrade in the environment and/or have properties that strongly bind it to the soil. Any pest control used should be conducted at the life stage when the pest is most vulnerable. Any method used should be site-specific and not used wholesale over a wide area.
- Apply the pesticide according to label directions. Under no conditions shall pesticides be applied in quantities that exceed manufacturer's instructions.
- Mix the pesticides and clean the application equipment in an area where accidental spills will not enter surface or groundwaters, and will not contaminate the soil.
- Store pesticides in enclosed areas or in covered impervious containment. Ensure that pesticide contaminated stormwater or spills/leaks of pesticides are not discharged to storm drains. Do not hose down paved areas to a storm drain or conveyance ditch. Store and maintain appropriate spill cleanup materials in a location known to all near the storage area.
- Clean up any spilled pesticides and ensure that the pesticide contaminated waste materials are kept in designated covered and contained areas.
- The pesticide application equipment must be capable of immediate shutoff in the event of an emergency.
- Do not spray pesticides within 100 feet of open waters including wetlands; ponds; and streams, sloughs, and any drainage ditch or channel that leads to open water, except when approved by Ecology or by the City of Tacoma. All sensitive areas including wells, creeks, and wetlands must be flagged prior to spraying.
- As required by the City of Tacoma or by Ecology, complete public posting of the area to be sprayed prior to the application.
- Spray applications should only be conducted during weather conditions as specified in the label direction and applicable local and state regulations. Do not apply during rain or immediately before expected rain.
- Pesticides shall not be applied to stormwater management facilities.

## Recommended BMPs for the Use of Pesticides:

- Consider alternatives to the use of pesticides such as covering or harvesting weeds, substitute vegetative growth, and manual weed control/moss removal.
- Consider the use of soil amendments, such as compost, that are known to control some common diseases in plants, such as Pythium root rot, ashy stem blight, and parasitic nematodes. The following are three possible mechanisms for disease control by compost addition (USEPA Publication 530-F-9-044):
  - Successful competition for nutrients by antibiotic production;
  - Successful predation against pathogens by beneficial microorganism; and
  - Activation of disease-resistant genes in plants by composts.

Installing an amended soil/landscape system can preserve both the plant system and the soil system more effectively. This type of approach provides a soil/landscape system with adequate depth, permeability, and organic matter to sustain itself and continue working as an effective stormwater infiltration system and a sustainable nutrient cycle.

- Once a pesticide is applied, its effectiveness should be evaluated for possible improvement. Records should be kept showing the applicability and inapplicability of the pesticides considered.
- An annual evaluation procedure should be developed including a review of the effectiveness of pesticide applications, impact on buffers and sensitive areas (including potable wells), public concerns, and recent toxicological information on pesticides used/proposed for use. If individual or public potable wells are located in the proximity of commercial pesticide applications, contact the regional Ecology hydrologist to determine if additional pesticide application control measures are necessary.
- Rinsate from equipment cleaning and/or triple-rinsing of pesticide containers should be used as product or recycled into product.

For more information, contact the WSU Extension Home-Assist Program at 253-445-4500; Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC), P.O. Box 7414, Berkeley, CA 94707; or the Washington Department of Ecology to obtain "Hazardous Waste Pesticides" (Publication #89-41); contact EPA to obtain a publication entitled "Suspended, Canceled and Restricted Pesticides" which lists all restricted pesticides and the specific uses that are allowed. Valuable information from these sources may also be available on the internet.

## Required BMPs for Vegetation Management:

- Use at least an eight-inch topsoil layer with at least 8 percent organic matter to provide a sufficient vegetation-growing medium.
- Select the appropriate turf grass mixture for climate and soil type based on recommendations from a licensed landscape architect.
- Selection of desired plant species can be made by adjusting the soil properties of the subject site. For example, a constructed wetland can be designed to resist the invasion of reed canary grass by layering specific strata of organic matters (e.g., compost forest product residuals) and creating a mildly acidic pH and carbon-rich soil medium. Consult a soil restoration specialist for site-specific conditions.
- Aerate lawns regularly in areas of heavy use, where the soil tends to become compacted. Aeration shall be conducted while the grasses in the lawn are growing most vigorously. Remove layers of thatch greater than ¾-inch deep.
- Set the mowing height at the highest acceptable level and mow at times and intervals designed to minimize stress on the turf. Generally mowing only 1/3 of the grass blade height will prevent stressing the turf.

## **Required BMPs for the Use of Fertilizers:**

- Fertilization needs vary by site depending on plant, soil, and climatic conditions. Evaluation of soil nutrient levels through regular testing ensures the best possible efficiency and economy of fertilization. For details on soils testing, contact the Pierce Conservation District or Cooperative Extension Service.
- Fertilizers shall be applied in amounts appropriate for the target vegetation and at the time of year that minimizes losses to surface and groundwaters. Do not fertilize during a drought or when the soil is dry. Alternatively, do not apply fertilizers within three days prior to predicted rainfall. The longer the period between fertilizer application and either rainfall or irrigation, the less fertilizer runoff occurs.
- Use slow release fertilizers such as methylene urea, IDBU, or resin coated fertilizers when appropriate, generally in the spring. Use of slow release fertilizers is especially important in areas with sandy or gravelly soils.
- Time the fertilizer application to periods of maximum plant uptake. Generally fall and spring applications are recommended.
- Properly trained persons shall apply all fertilizers. Fertilizers shall not be applied to grass swales, filter strips, or buffer areas that drain to surface water bodies.
- Fertilizers shall not be applied to stormwater management facilities.