

5 Simple Things YOU Can Do to Protect Your Lake

Indiana Clean Lakes Program • Factsheet 09-02

1. Use Phosphorus Free Fertilizer

- Most turf grass does NOT need more phosphorus. Grass needs mostly nitrogen for green growth.
- The 2nd number on a fertilizer bag shows the % P...it should be "0".
- P-free fertilizer is widely available...or you can ask for it at your local garden center.



- Do NOT apply fertilizer down to the water's edge.
- Leave at least a 10-foot wide unfertilized strip – any closer and you may as well fertilize the lake!
- Fertilizer will migrate to make this unfertilized strip green.

2. Create More Natural Shoreline Habitat

- Shallow water habitat (*littoral* zone) is critical for proper ecological functioning in lakes.
- The littoral zone provides **habitat** (for breeding & living) for aquatic organisms of all sizes – insects to fish, **filters** out pollutants, and **stabilizes** sediments.
- Where would you catch more fish??



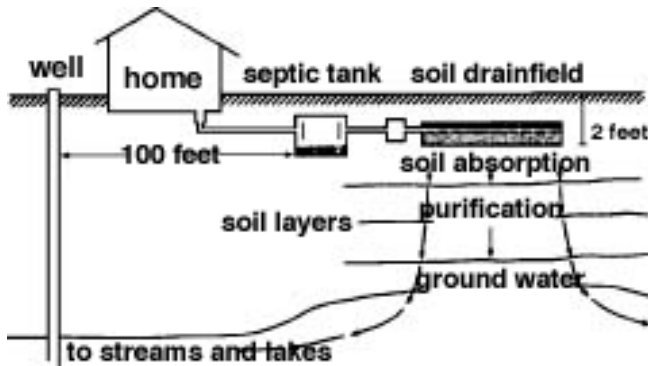
Here?or..... Here?

- Woody debris and rocks attract fish because they provide good habitat!
- Seawalls reflect waves that scour native plants. They also prevent turtles and frogs from moving onto land because they can't climb up the steep seawall face.



- Grass and seawalls create habitat for geese.
- Natural vegetation along the lakeshore creates habitat for beneficial aquatic organisms.

3. Properly Maintain Your Septic Tank and Drainfield



- Don't overload your system with water. A waterlogged drainfield will not purify the wastes.
 - Limit the length and frequency of showers.
 - Limit laundry to only one load per day.
- Don't drive over your drainfield.
- Don't plant woody shrubs or trees over your drainfield.
- Have your tank pumped regularly – for example, a 500-gallon tank serving a 4-person family should be pumped once each year; a 1,000-gallon tank once every two years.



A surface failure



Grass over the septic tank should NOT be green

- Test septic systems around the lake by flushing a dye down toilets and then check the lake for any color. This costs only about \$1 per home and is a great activity for your lake association.

4. Don't blow grass clippings or rake leaves into the lake

- Grass and leaves contain nitrogen and phosphorus - - nutrients that stimulate algae growth.
- Grass clippings and leaves consume oxygen from the water as they decompose.
- Grass clippings and leaves build up organic muck on the lake bottom.



5. Plant Only NATIVE Plants in Your Lakeshore Property

- Many non-natives, while attractive, can be invasive.
- Invasive, non-native plants can crowd out beneficial native plants.
- Non-native plants don't provide necessary habitat for native animals and birds.
- Control of non-native species is one of the most serious problems in lakes and streams.



Vinca minor (Myrtle)



Asian Bush Honeysuckle



Purple Loosestrife

For more information, contact the *Indiana Clean Lakes Program* at:



<http://www.spea.indiana.edu/clp/>