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<https://vtipl.org/556-2/>

Natural bodies of water are a precious resource. Protecting the quality of our waters is critical to the health and welfare of all beings. Those of us who maintain lawns have an opportunity to help reduce stormwater runoff into roads and storm drains, thus reducing the pollutants flowing into our lakes and streams. How is this possible? Simply by raising the blade on our lawnmowers to three inches and leaving the grass clippings on the lawn.

What do these practices accomplish?

Grass cut at three inches grows longer roots, creating air pockets that allow more rain absorption. Clippings left on the lawn break down into organic matter, serving as a natural fertilizer for healthy soils. Healthy soils act like a sponge, soaking up, filtering, and storing rainwater and snowmelt that could otherwise end up in storm drains and local water bodies.



Mowing only about one-third of the length of the grass at each mowing adds another benefit: the grass conserves energy for growing strong roots and the clippings will decompose more quickly.

A campaign called [Raise the Blade](#)* promotes these lawncare practices to homeowners, businesses, municipalities and nonprofit organizations throughout the Lake Champlain basin. To date, 5 cities and towns, 15 businesses and 5 nonprofits have joined the campaign by committing to the practices. Many of these participants post [Raise the Blade lawn signs](#) in prominent locations on their property. This sets an example for the community and helps spread the word about these simple ways to reduce stormwater runoff.

The Raise the Blade campaign would like to invite members of faith communities and houses of worship to consider adopting the recommended practices for their lawns. If you would like more information, or to obtain a Raise the Blade lawn sign free of charge, please contact Linda Patterson at linda.patterson@uvm.edu or phone 802-734-2617.

* Raise the Blade campaign is part of [Lawn to Lake](#), a collaboration of regional and state organizations devoted to water quality protection by reducing stormwater runoff and building healthy soils. Partners include Composting Association of Vermont, Cornell University Extension, Lake Champlain Basin Program, Lake Champlain Committee, Lake Champlain Sea Grant, State University of New York Plattsburgh, University of Vermont Extension, and Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.