3. **Avoid or minimize use of fertilizers.**
   If you must apply fertilizers or pesticides, apply the minimum amount printed on the label and do not apply immediately before it is forecast to rain. Applying excessive fertilizer does not make grass greener; it just makes the Highland Lakes greener with algae and nuisance plant growth when the fertilizer reaches the lake. Plants can only take advantage of a limited amount of fertilizer. The remainder is not absorbed and will sit on the surface of the grass, then be washed into the lake when it rains. Use organic natural fertilizers that release nutrients slowly into the soil, as opposed to chemical fertilizers that are quickly released and easily washed into the lake.

4. **Avoid or minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides.**
   Plant native trees, shrubs and flowers that require less watering and do not require pesticides or fertilizers. If an area needs to be weeded, pull them by hand or smother the weeds using a tarp or newspaper instead of herbicides. Visit epa.gov/safepestcontrol/lawn-and-garden for more tips on natural pest management solutions for your yard.

5. **Wash your car at a car wash, not in your driveway or yard.**
   Soap can easily enter the lake and degrade water quality. If you must wash your car at home, use a hose nozzle with a trigger to save water and pour buckets of soapy water down the drain, not into the yard or street.

6. **Routinely pick up after your pet.**
   Pet waste contains nutrients and bacteria that can enter the lake during a rainfall event and contribute to the growth of nuisance plants and algae. In addition, pet waste can increase the amount of bacteria in the lake, which can negatively affect recreation such as swimming.

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KEEP THE LAKE CLEAN, NOT GREEN

A Property Owner's Guide to Minimizing Growth of Nuisance Aquatic Plants in the Highland Lakes

1. **Avoid dumping leaf litter and grass clippings near the shoreline or into the lake.** Nutrients from yard trimmings and decomposing plants can fuel the growth of nuisance aquatic plants and algae. Bag up and remove yard trimmings and leaves, or place them in an area away from the lakeshore to compost. This material can later be used as mulch in flower beds and gardens to promote water retention in the soil. It also serves as a natural fertilizer for landscape plants.

2. **Establish a vegetated buffer strip along the lakeshore of the property.** A buffer strip is an area of natural or managed vegetation adjacent to a creek, river or natural drainage way. This buffer helps protect waterways and aquatic resources from the short- and long-term impacts of stormwater pollution, by:

   - Removing sediments, nutrients, metals, and other toxic pollutants.
   - Providing wildlife habitat.
   - Slowing down runoff and reducing shoreline erosion.
   - Offering a more effective and longer-lasting solution to erosion than bulkheads. Shoreline plants have extensive root systems that hold soil and can maintain a healthier shoreline ecosystem.

This property on Lake LBJ uses native and naturalized plants to create a vegetation buffer between the grass turf and the lakeshore. Photo courtesy of Robert and Sheryl Yantis.

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