



gwinnettcounty
Department of **Water Resources**

Want a greener lawn? Try composting!

Did you know that grass clippings are especially high in the nutrient nitrogen? When applied to a lawn, nitrogen can help keep your grass green. However, when excess nitrogen is in a stream or other body of water there can be unchecked growth of algae, or algal blooms. Algal blooms can lead to reduced oxygen levels in the water, which can cause a fish kill, and can even be harmful to humans.

How does this excess nitrogen get into the streams? One way is when rain washes the grass clippings into the storm water drainage system. This system leads directly to streams and other bodies of water. Instead of letting grass clippings and their nitrogen-rich source of nutrients go down the drainage system, consider composting instead. Composting your landscape refuse, not just grass clippings but also leaves and pruning debris, ensures that the nutrients stay out of waterways. This also produces mulch that you can use to improve the quality of the soil in your yard or garden.

A successful compost pile needs three main ingredients: greens, browns, and water. Your green grass clippings are perfect for composting due to their high nitrogen content, along with fruit and vegetable kitchen scraps. The browns come from dead leaves and branches. Water comes from nature, but in order to keep your compost pile in prime condition, you may need to add water during dry periods.

Layer the compost pile with greens and browns. Be sure to mix your pile at least once a month in order to improve decomposition. It is also important to avoid adding meats or animal waste to the pile, because these materials will attract scavenging wildlife and generate foul odors. A properly maintained pile should not produce any strong odors.

Nature will take care of the rest. Depending on your pile, the compost will be ready to use anywhere from four months to a year after the process begins. If you want to learn more about composting there are many resources available online through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or the University of Georgia Extension Service. An excellent composting brochure is also available [here](#).

