

GREENSPACE FACTS

There are numerous environmental and health benefits that come from properly maintained public and private green space. For those living on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway, these benefits translate into better water and air quality, economic savings, and healthier communities.

Environmental Benefits From Properly Maintained Green Space

- **Erosion Control and Run-Off Prevention** - One of most significant functions of healthy turf surfaces and lawns is to stabilize and protect the soil against water and wind erosion. This is particularly important in preventing nutrient run-off. Overall, healthy, dense lawns are three times more effective than weedy, unhealthy green space in preventing nitrogen run-off.
- **Flood Mitigation** – When combined with other flood prevention tactics – such as adding mulch to landscape settings, planting rain gardens, regularly cleaning storm drains, and removing debris from drainage systems – lawns and turf surfaces help reduce the impact of floods. This is because turf can slow runoff and its dense, sponge-like root system can better enable rain water to infiltrate into the ground.
- **Water Purification** – Turf surfaces and lawns not only absorb rainfall, they trap and remove pollutants, which are broken down by the root system and soil microbes. Turf also protects water sources when excessive applications are inadvertently applied. Fertilizers and pesticides that are applied to bare soil are more likely to contaminate water sources than those applied to turf surfaces.
- **Temperature Modification/Energy and Cost saving** – In general, turf and lawn surfaces having a beneficial cooling effect on the environment. In summer months, lawns can be 30 percent cooler than asphalt and 14 percent cooler than bare ground. This reduces the cost of (and need for) air conditioning and, in urbanized areas, the cooling effects of turf grass help reduce the occurrence of “heat sinks” in cities.
- **Oxygen Generation** - A 50 by 50 foot lawn releases enough oxygen for a family of four on a daily basis while greenspace along the US interstate highway system releases enough oxygen for 22 million people.
- **Carbon sequestration** - Properly maintained green space plays a constructive role in the effort to sequester carbon from the atmosphere.

Health Benefits From Properly Maintained Lawns

- **Increased Physical Activity/Reducing Obesity** - Access to yards and other turf grass surfaces is an important predictor of increased physical activity and helps reduce the risk of obesity.
- **Air Purification** – Lawns and turf surfaces purify and trap millions of tons of dust, soil, and other particulate matter. This is particularly important in urban areas with high incidence rates of asthma and other breathing disorders.
- **Healthcare/Stress Reduction** – Studies of hospital patients reveal that access to or viewing lawns and green space for even a few minutes a day helps reduce stress.

Statistics above sourced from LoveYourLandscape.org, the Environmental Health Research Foundation, University of Minnesota Extension, and other sources.



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