✔ Lawn Care Practice Summary

PRACTICE (Rate each practice by completing Assessments 1, 2 and 3)

Fertilization
Maintaining a healthy lawn requires proper fertility. Improper fertilizer use, however, can waste money and increase the likelihood of water contamination. A lawn-fertilizing schedule should be adjusted according to soil fertility, the health of the lawn and the owner's objectives. A low-maintenance lawn may require only one fertilizer application per year, while a high-quality lawn may require as many as five applications.

Mowing
It is essential to mow a lawn at the correct height and frequency to maintain a healthy lawn. Many people mow their lawns too short, inviting weeds and other pests. Mowing should provide a uniform, pleasing appearance while improving the density of the grass plants by promoting the development of roots and leaves. High-density grass discourages weed invasion and the loss of fertilizers and pesticides.

Irrigation
To maintain a high-quality lawn, irrigation is often required. When irrigation is done properly, the lawn can tolerate more pest damage without the use of pesticides than unirrigated lawns. When irrigation is done improperly, it increases the chance for surface and groundwater pollution and is a waste of money and water.

Pest control
When pests invade lawns, consider tolerating the damage. If pest control is desired consider the full range of pest control options: cultural (including those listed above), biological, mechanical and chemical (pesticides). Use pesticides together with other control methods. Improperly applied pesticides may contaminate groundwater and surface water. For the latest lawn pest control recommendations, contact your county MSU Extension office.

Seeding
The best time to seed or repair a lawn is in the fall or spring, with mid-August to late September providing the most reliable results. Later seedings may fail if the seedlings have insufficient growth to survive the winter. A dormant seeding made in November is acceptable because low temperatures will prevent germination until the following spring. Summer seedings are often unsuccessful because of high temperatures, lack of moisture and competition from weeds. Runoff from areas of bare soil can be a major source of pollution in lakes and rivers.

✔ Assessment 3 – Late Summer/Fall Lawn Care (mid-August – November)

1. LOW RISK recommended	2. MED. RISK Potential hazard	3. HIGH RISK Unsafe situation	YOUR RISK	NOTES
Late summer/fall or dormant fertilizer application (late Oct. - early Nov.) to strengthen root system.	No late summer/fall or dormant fertilization, resulting in a weaker lawn in the spring and summer.			If you fertilize once per year, late summer or fall is the best time.
Lawn mowed as long as growth continues.	Lawn mowing discontinued before growth stops.			Unmowed grass over the winter months may result in disease and other pest problems.
Tree leaves composted or mowed into the lawn.	Fall leaves not collected nor mowed into the lawn.	Leaves dumped or allowed to enter water bodies.		Leaves left over the winter may kill grass plants.
				Lawn irrigation is usually not required at this time.
Weeds managed by maintaining a healthy lawn or herbicide(s) used to spot treat weeds.	Herbicide(s) used to treat entire lawn area.			Fall application provides best broadleaf weed control and allows lawn grasses to fill in open areas.
Insects and diseases managed by maintaining a healthy lawn.	Insect/disease identified. Pesticide applied according to label instructions.	Pesticide applied without pest identification and without regard to label instructions.		Many home lawns do not require the use of a lawn insecticide or fungicide.
New and weak lawn areas seeded between mid-August and late September.	Lawn areas seeded in November or later.	Bare areas not seeded (or sodded) and subject to soil erosion.		Dormant seedings should be limited to level areas and mulched to prevent erosion.