

**Rhode Island Department of Environmental  
Management – Sustainable Turf Management for  
Landscaping**

**Self-Certification Checklist**

**Sustainable Turf Management for  
Landscaping Certification Program**



*Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management*

**RI TURFGRASS  
FOUNDATION**

January 2015

## *A Message from the Director*

*The Sustainable Turf Management for Landscaping Certification Program is an exciting and new partnership with state's landscaping businesses and municipalities. This checklist provides a menu of Best Management Practices (BMPs) covering a range of activities focusing on efficient turf management and water conservation in Rhode Island. Participation in the program will significantly reduce a company's environmental impact when managing turf.*

*The Department of Environmental Management encourages your participation and is ready to provide assistance with your efforts to improve our State's environment.*

*Janet Coit  
Director*



# Rhode Island Sustainable Turf Management – Landscaping Certification Workbook



**BECOME A RHODE ISLAND  
DEM CERTIFIED - SUSTAINABLE TURF  
MANAGEMENT LANDSCAPING FACILITY  
AND RECEIVE THESE BENEFITS**



Becoming a “green” certified landscaping business or municipality begins with practicing Pollution Prevention (P2). Pollution Prevention means to prevent pollution by reducing the sources of pollution. The P2 program for “turf maintenance” at Rhode Island DEM is a grant funded research project. This is not a regulatory initiative. The research conducted provides DEM with information on how the “turf maintenance” industry is performing with regards to P2. It allows DEM to award businesses and municipalities who are doing good work and it allows us to assist businesses and municipalities at achieving P2 goals.

The following checklist is a tool for you as a business or municipal employee to evaluate your P2 performance. The checklist provides a menu of pollution prevention practices for turf maintenance. The goal of the checklist is for you to choose the P2 practices that you currently employ and to score yourself based on the points provided.

Why should a business get involved with Rhode Island DEM’s P2 Program?

- It allows businesses and towns to cut down on the costs of hazardous and toxic products such as fertilizers and pesticides.
- It allows business and municipalities to reduce exposure to harmful chemicals and reduce the exposure to the environment.
- Other advantages can include reduced regulatory burdens, reduced permit fees, enhanced public image, and a healthier environment.
- Once certified, a business will be awarded a certificate or decal to display on your company property and a *Sustainable Turf Management Landscaping Facility* logo to use for advertising (website, literature, decals, etc.).
- You will also receive a listing on the RIDEM website and Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association (RINLA), which identifies your business or municipality as Rhode Island certified as environmentally preferable.

## **How the program works:**

1. Complete this Workbook by checking off all of the initiatives that your facility is currently undertaking. If you need assistance filling out the workbook, please call Ann Battersby at DEM’s Office of Customer and Technical Assistance at (401) 222-4700 ext. 7284. Please see contact information below. Also, please visit the webpage

at <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/assist/grncert/index.htm> for more information and resources.

Please understand that it is not necessary to complete all of the items in the workbook to become a certified business; the workbook is a comprehensive list of the many different ways to generate points. Employing all of the initiatives in this workbook is unrealistic, so please use the ones that you have not yet implemented as recommendations.

2. Calculate your score by adding up all of the checked boxes.
3. **Send completed workbook to the DEM's Office of Customer and Technical Assistance.**

**Rhode Island Departmental of Environmental Management  
Office of Customer and Technical Assistance  
235 Promenade Street  
Providence, RI 02908-5767**

Telephone: (401) 222-6822  
Contact: Ann Battersby Ext. 7284  
[ann.battersby@dem.ri.gov](mailto:ann.battersby@dem.ri.gov)

4. Your workbook will be reviewed and receive a final score by DEM's Office of Customer and Technical Assistance.

If your business **scores 200 points**, your business qualifies for an automatic certification from the state for two years. In two years, you will need to increase your points by 50 to a total of 250 to be eligible for a re-certification.

5. Upon final scoring of the workbook, you will be sent an official letter detailing your point total and possible low cost recommendations. The official notice of certification will allow you to display the certification logo on a banner, flag, sticker or your letterhead and marketing materials.
6. The DEM Office of Customer and Technical Assistance will randomly select businesses for verification appointments throughout the year. These visits will be scheduled and not "unannounced".

# Sustainable Turf Management For Landscaping Self-Certification Workbook

765 total available points  
Only 200 points necessary for automatic certification

<p>Business Name/Municipality Name:</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Address:</p>   <p style="text-align: center;">Contact Person:</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Telephone Number:</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">E-mail address:</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Facility Telephone Number:</p>  <p>Describe the services your facility/municipality provides to its customers or residents (ex. Mowing, irrigation, nutrient management, landscape design ect....)</p>
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## SECTION 1: CHEMICAL USE

Fertilizers are not applied at all to all municipal (town) owned land.	<input type="checkbox"/> 80 points
<b><u>Answer the following questions if fertilizers are used.</u></b>	
Conduct soil test for nutrients prior to establishing a nutrient management plan for a site. If you conduct soil tests, where do you send your samples:	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 points

<p>If you don't conduct soil testing prior to taking on a site, what is the average (approximate) amount of applications performed on all town owned land. For landscapers, what is suggested to your clients? For example, 2 Spring and 2 Fall applications. Please describe:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 points
<p>Phosphate fertilizers are used <u>only if a soil test</u> concludes its use is warranted. Follow guidelines in soil test analysis on how much phosphate soil to apply.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 points
<p>Use nitrogen fertilizers that contain 50% or more of the Total Nitrogen (TN) as Slow Release Nitrogen (SRN).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 points
<p>If soil testing is not used, apply no more than 1 lb. / 1000 sq. ft. of <u>phosphate</u> fertilizer to establish <u>new turf</u>. This rate applies to a single application.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
<p>Fertilizer equipment is correctly calibrated prior to EACH use.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 points
<p>When applying fertilizer on turf adjacent to paved surfaces, contain and clean up any spills of fertilizers from paved surfaces to prevent run-off.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
<p>Never apply fertilizer to bare ground unless you are re-seeding.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
<p>Apply no more than 3.25 lbs of total nitrogen/ 1000 sq. ft per year.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 points
<p>Apply no more than 2.0 lbs of total nitrogen /1000 sq. ft. per year in <u>environmentally sensitive</u> areas.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 points
<p>Use weather forecasts to determine fertilizer application times. Never apply within 48 hours of heavy rain event.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 points
<p>Return any un-used fertilizer to its original container after each use.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
<p>Do not apply fertilizer during summer dormancy.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 points
<p>Do not apply fertilizer during winter months on frozen or partially frozen ground.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 points
<p><b><u>Never</u></b> apply fertilizer on turf adjacent to water bodies (wetlands).</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 points
<p>Please report your current average use of fertilizer used at residences/properties/fields/public spaces you service in lbs. of fertilizer / 1000 sq. ft. <u>For example</u>, if you don't use a soil test and your general protocol is to apply fertilizer 4 times a year (similar to a Scotts ® 4 step plan) <b><u>estimate</u></b> what you put down in total at all the locations you maintain/service.</p> <p>Current use of Nitrogen (N) (lbs)/1000 sq. ft.:  Current use of Phosphate (P2O5) (lbs) /1000 sq.ft:  Current Use of Potash (K2O) (lbs)/1000 sq. ft.:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 35 points

Please list the most commonly used fertilizers.	
Organic fertilizers are used in your nutrient management plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 points
Organic soil amendments tested for nutrient content prior to their use.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Please state whether you typically use granular or liquid applications for fertilizer.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Do employees responsible for pesticide applications hold a valid commercial applicator's license or commercial applicator's certificate as per the <u>Rhode Island Rules and Regulations Relating to Pesticides (Pesticide Regulations)</u> .  Provide License Number for employees responsible for applications:	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Do those responsible for application of pesticides maintain the necessary record keeping as required by the "Pesticide Regulations"	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Please list the types (name), frequency, and consistency (granular, liquid) of pesticides used on the property. Attach an additional sheet if necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/> 35 points
Decisions to use pesticides are based solely on pest scouting and records from previous growing seasons. If pesticide use is necessary, use a pre-emergence application.	<input type="checkbox"/> 35 points

Apply pesticides in a manner designed to protect water and other natural resources.	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 points
Store pesticides inside, not outdoors, and on impervious surfaces.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
<b>SECTION 1 CHEMICAL USE CATEGORY TOTAL:</b>	

## SECTION 2: WASTE MANAGEMENT

Areas that contain used oil storage have secondary containment.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Containers of used oil are labeled as "Used Oil".	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
If used oil filters are removed, are they properly managed by draining, and proper recycling.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Recycle clippings (leaf & grass) into the turf canopy wherever possible returning valuable nutrients back to the turf.	<input type="checkbox"/> 20 points
Buy fertilizers and pesticides in limited quantities and do not store large volumes of chemicals on site.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Grass clippings are collected and composted. Compost piles comply with Rule 8 of the Composting Regulations if you are a facility that composts leaf and yard waste. <a href="http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/waste/swrg05_8.pdf">http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/waste/swrg05_8.pdf</a> . For more information on Rule 8, please contact Ann Battersby 1-401-222-4700 ext. 7284	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 points
<b>SECTION 2 WASTE MANAGEMENT CATEGORY TOTAL</b>	

## SECTION 3: CHEMICAL SAFETY

Store and maintain vehicles and equipment on covered, sealed impervious areas.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Equipment washing areas drain to an oil/water separator and from there to a sanitary sewer or holding tank.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Keep absorbent materials on hand for the containment and remediation of spills.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Store all hazardous materials in sealed, locked areas or buildings. Identify locations for these materials on the site plan and register all materials with the local fire marshal.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Provide impervious surfaces in chemical mixing areas.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Dispose of hazardous materials in a manner consistent with the label and state and federal regulations.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
<b>SECTION 3 CHEMICAL SAFETY CATEGORY TOTAL</b>	

## SECTION 4: MOWING

Mow cool season grasses (Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, tall and fine fescues) in range of 2 ½ to 3 ½ inches. <u>Ideally turf should be cut to 3 inches.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 points
Vary mowing patterns to avoid areas of compaction.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Change direction of mowing patterns every other mow to promote shoot growth.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
For new turf establishment: <b>never</b> clear or maintain any turf within 50 ft. of wetland or 100 ft. of a stream or river.	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 points



For established turf: Advise clients to NOT maintain turf within 50 ft. of a wetlands or 100 ft. of a stream.	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 points
<b>SECTION 4 MOWING CATEGORY TOTAL</b>	

### **SECTION 5 : WATER CONSERVATION**

If irrigation of turf is part of your responsibility as a landscaper or municipality, please briefly explain your irrigation system:	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Initiate irrigation only at the onset of mild drought so that grass can recharge root systems prior to drought conditions.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Turf Type Tall Fescue (TTTF) grass is planted for new turf and overseeding. TTTF is a low maintenance grass with minimal water needs.	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 points
Incorporate hand watering to spot treat during very dry periods.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Mow regularly and frequently to minimize water loss through reduced leaf area.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Keep mower blades sharp. Dull mower blades can increase water use by delaying the healing of open wounds.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Adjust irrigation systems according to weather patterns.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Mow at higher heights to promote deep rooting and therefore access to greater amounts of water.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Perform necessary irrigation in early part of the day when a more uniform distribution of water can occur.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Correct areas of frequent ponding and pooling that have poor drainage.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Current acreage of total land irrigated  If you are a landscaper, please <u>estimate</u> the size in acres of all the properties you service as an estimation of areas irrigated. If you are municipality, please estimate the total acreage of public (town/city owned) lands you maintain that are irrigated.	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 points
Allow for mild drought stress (leaf roll/fold/, foot printing, browning) to occur between irrigation events to promote deeper rooting and drought resistance.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Under conditions associated with low infiltration, use short cycles rather than applying all water in one event.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Do not mow unless absolutely necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Use weather forecasts to determine irrigation schedules.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points

Develop a plan to reduce irrigated acreage and/or quantity of water per irrigated acre. Please describe or attach a plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Use mulches around shrubs and in landscaped areas.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Use recycled water at some locations.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
Suggest to clients to install rain shutoff switches on all existing irrigation systems, if they are not present, to avoid over-watering following significant rainfall. Or, install rain shutoff switches to new irrigation systems.	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 points
Use soil cultivation techniques such as spiking, coring, and slicing to improve infiltration.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 points
<b>SECTION 5 WATER CONSERVATION CATEGORY TOTAL</b>	

**SECTION 6: OTHER INITIATIVES (please attach any necessary documentation)**

Create an environmental policy/ task force/team to promote more sustainable practices for your business/town.	<input type="checkbox"/> Points negotiable
Other environmental certifications and awards	<input type="checkbox"/> Points negotiable
Other activities to reduce environmental impact. Please describe	<input type="checkbox"/> Points negotiable
Provide educational materials to residents or clients on sustainable lawn care services/best management practices. Describe or attach material. Does your business offer an organic land care option? If so, attach additional information.	<input type="checkbox"/> Points negotiable

*Add up ALL points, and enter the total .....*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Total Points**

- If your business scored less than 200 points, but are confident that you can obtain the remainder, or if you want free technical assistance and low cost recommendations to help you obtain the remainder, apply for the provisional certification, which allows your business to receive the same benefits as the automatic certification while you plan and work towards the accumulation of 200 points.
- 200 points qualifies for an automatic certification.

*Thank you for your participation!*

### References

- 1) Interim Final Report to New England and New York State Environmental Agency Commissioners. The Northeast Voluntary Turf Initiative. New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission. October 2013.
- 2) Best Management Practices for Lawn and Landscape Turf. University of Massachusetts Extension. Version 1.5. 2013.
- 3) Rhode Island DEM Green Golf Course Certification Checklist. May 2010.