



BURNING GRASS

Burning a lawn or grass is NOT allowed if the Province or Municipality have declared a Restricted Fire Zone (RFZ), a Provincial Burn Ban, or suspended all burn permits.

You can burn a lawn or grass, with a residential burn permit, provided you meet the permit conditions, and the following conditions:

Under the Ontario Outdoor Fire Regulation O.Reg. 207/96

- The total area to be burned does not exceed one hectare (2.5 acres or 10 000 sq. Meters)
- The flaming edge of the fire does not exceed 30 meters (100 ft.) in length.
- You have adequate tools and water to contain the fire to the fire site.
- A responsible person attends the fire until it is extinguished.
- The **property owner** is still **liable** if the fire is not contained.

It is not legal to light or tend a fire on property you do not own.

A Permit is only valid for property you own.

Grass Burning Myths (Special thanks to Nova Scotia Natural Resources)

To many, burning grass is a tradition, almost a rite of spring. Upon closer examination the reasons for spring grass burning are largely unfounded. Rather than being beneficial, grass burning is often destructive to the ecosystem and can lead to dangerous fire conditions.

Myth: It's safe to burn grass as long as there is still some snow on the ground.

Fact: Within hours of snow melting, dead grass becomes flammable; especially if there have been drying winds. Grass fires burn hot and fast and spread quickly around, and even over, patches of snow.

Myth: Spring grass burning controls weeds.

Fact: Weeds deposit their seeds into the surrounding soil in the fall. Burning creates an ideal bare soil bed for the seeds to germinate.

Myth: Spring burning improves the new grass crop.

Fact: Burning actually reduces grass yield 50 to 70 per cent.

Myth: Burning makes the new grass come in greener.

Fact: The new grass will be the same colour whether burning took place or not. It just appears greener due to the contrast against the bare, blackened ground.

Myth: I don't see much wildlife around here so I can burn grass without threatening any animals.

Fact: Burning destroys the habitat of species you don't normally see such as mice and voles as well as the nests and eggs of certain birds. If the fire gets out of control, larger animals may be threatened by the flames and loss of habitat.

Myth: Lost habitat will grow back in a few months and the wildlife will return.

Fact: It may take several years to replace what was lost. Vegetation is often multi-layered with higher growth protecting undergrowth. Different species depend on different layers for food or shelter. Loss of the lower layer and its residents will impact species that prey upon those lost species.

Myth: Spring burning is the easiest way to get rid of last year's vegetation.

Fact: Easy perhaps, but not good for the soil. Burning results in most of the old plants' nutrients going up in smoke or remaining in ash that is washed away. Burning also releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Ploughing old plants under, or allowing them to decompose, allows carbon and fertilizing elements to go back into the soil.

Myth: It's pretty safe to burn grass here. There's a fire hall just down the road.

Fact: Under the *Forest Fire Prevention Act*, if you light a fire, you are responsible for it. If your fire gets out of control you may be liable for the cost of fighting the fire, the destruction of others' property, and face criminal penalties for violating burning regulations.