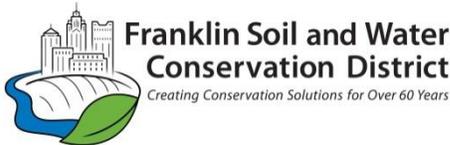




GET GRASSY!
Clean water by the yard.



2018 Program Update



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Program Overview

What is Get Grassy?

Get Grassy! encourages central Ohio residents to take good care of their lawns because well-maintained lawns have deeper root systems, drought and disease tolerance, and are better for water quality. It was developed in 2015 and launched in 2016 by the City of Columbus and Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District. Lawn care has been identified as a source of non-point source pollution under the Ohio and federal EPA. As such it is regulated by MS4 permits held by the City of Columbus and many surrounding cities.

Is this a pro-lawn campaign?

No. Lawn is an important part of most home and commercial landscapes. Taking better care of existing turfgrass so that it's healthy enhances its environmental services by absorbing more stormwater and preventing soil erosion (soil is Ohio's #1 water pollutant!) This is not contradictory to backyard conservation techniques that can include adding biodiversity with native plants, or decreasing polluted runoff by installing rain gardens and rain barrels.

How does GetGrassy! reach Columbus-area residents?

We reach residents in two ways: directly through public events (including educational workshops, and publications shared with our partners), and through their lawn care companies. We use eye-catching flyers, simple messages, visual reminders like rain gauges and magnets, and social media. Residents who pledge for better water quality receive a free gift as an incentive to participate.

How was it developed?

Franklin Soil and Water and the city of Columbus developed this program with assistance from marketing professionals, local lawn care companies, the Turfgrass Science Extension Team at The Ohio State University, a focus group of central Ohio residents, and additional natural resource professionals and public agencies.

What are its goals?

Our primary goal is to increase our reach to residents in promoting good stormwater practices: proper disposal of yard waste; mowing high; watering at the right time; keeping product off of hard surfaces and applying it correctly; and keeping rainwater on property to prevent polluted runoff.

How is Get Grassy! measuring success?

Franklin Soil and Water is measuring participation and program effectiveness through pledge forms, website counts, estimated residents reached, and participant surveys.

How can I help or learn more?

Take the pledge at www.getgrassy.org. Contact Sara Ernst at sernst@franklinswcd.org or 614-486-9613 to receive program updates or literature for distribution.

Program Partners

This program was developed with support and feedback from public agencies, professional organizations, non-profit groups, and lawn care companies. Franklin Soil and Water is grateful to all of our Get Grassy program partners, all of whom are instrumental to its success in central Ohio. In 2017-18 we began placing Get Grassy hot cards at 9 of 10 nurseries affiliated with our Gardening for Clean Water Program (one is located outside the County).

Professional Organizations and Non-Profit Groups

Friends of Alum Creek and Tributaries (FACT)

Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW)

Grange Insurance Audubon Center

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)

Ohio Lawn Care Association

Ohio State University - Turf Extension Specialists

Ohio Turfgrass Foundation

Sierra Club

Lawn Care literature developed, reviewed, and distributed through partner organizations

Lawn Care Companies

Bio Green Ohio

GoodNature Organic Lawn Care

Grassroots Lawn and Irrigation Service

Watershed Organic Lawn Care

TruGreen

Lawn Care literature distributed to clients through these companies

Gardening for Clean Water Nurseries

Darby Creek Nursery (Hilliard)

Dill's Greenhouse (Canal Winchester)

Kurtz Bros. (Westerville location)

Lowes Home Improvement (Columbus)

Oakland Nurseries (New Albany)

Oakland Nurseries (Columbus)

Oakland Nurseries (Dublin)

Strader's Garden Center (Grove City)

Strader's Garden Center (East/Southeast)

Lawn Care literature distributed at these locations with permission

The Program *(Drop-down message menu found at GetGrassy.org)*

Soak it Up, Buttercup

Rain is your resource, Soak it in!

Install a rain barrel or add a rain garden to your yard and put rainwater to work for you. For rebate information, visit greenspotbackyards.org.

Regular yard care keeps mosquitoes away

Mosquitoes are small pests that can be hugely annoying. Thankfully, simple yard care can keep the mosquito population from booming. Mosquitoes need water that has been standing for a week or longer to breed. Empty plant saucers, dump and refill bird baths, and use rain barrel water regularly. Keep your roof and street gutters free of debris so water can properly drain. Rain gardens or low spots in your yard should drain completely after a storm within a day or two.

Mow to grow

Did you know all lawn mowers have adjustable settings? Using your mower's highest setting (3-4") allows you to grow taller grass with deeper roots. Taller grass shades out weeds and is more drought-resistant, so it stays green longer. Spring grass grows fast; mow more than once a week to avoid removing too much at one time. When you cut your grass, leave clippings on the lawn where they will break down quickly and feed your lawn.

Streaming Live! From your Backyard.

Not the green we were looking for

Dead plants, grass, and leaves create "food" for algae. Algae blooms pollute our water, make it smell and taste bad, and cost us more at the water treatment plant. Do your part to protect our water by simply pointing your mower so grass clippings land in the grass, not in the street or sidewalk, or sweep them up after mowing.

Only rain down the drain

Storm drains in our streets and curbs play a big role in protecting our homes and properties from flooding. Remove trash, grass clippings and leaves that clog drains before they wash away. Make sure your waste doesn't end up in our river. Practice "grasscycling" by leaving clippings on your lawn and mulching leaves in the fall. Too much yard waste? You can easily compost at home or with the city.

Sidewalks are for chalk

Did you know that storm drains in our streets are directly connected to local creeks, streams, and rivers? Rainwater and sprinklers easily wash fertilizers, grass clippings, trash, and pet waste from driveways, roads, and sidewalks into our waters. Make sure that anything you put on your lawn stays there by following label directions and applying to targeted areas.

Soil is good for grass, not fish

Soil is important for green plants, but not for healthy rivers. Just like smog can make it hard for us to breathe, soil in the water makes it hard for fish to breathe. Keep your soil where it belongs by using mulch, keeping grass healthy, and planting deep-rooted Ohio natives.

Ditches aren't for dumping

Ditches and creeks- even those that are sometimes dry- play a big role in reducing neighborhood flooding. Decaying yard waste in ditches can make "food" for algae. Never dump lawn debris like grass clippings, branches, leaves or mulch into creek beds or ditches. It can clog the creek, cause flooding, and feed algae blooms in our ponds and rivers. Leave creek beds and ditches clear so water can flow naturally.

Around water

Leave buffers around water sources. Pay special attention to protecting creeks, ponds, and reservoirs. Plants help stop pollution before it gets to waterways.

Healthy Lawns 101

Choose fall

If you only fertilize once a year, choose fall! University research shows fall fertilization is the best for growing healthy lawns with vigorous root systems. Too much or misplaced fertilizer can hurt your grass or cause water pollution, so pick the right kind and keep it on the grass and off driveways, sidewalks, and roads.

Only if you live on a golf course

If you cut grass really short so you don't have to cut it as often, you could actually be hurting it. Short blades of grass weaken a lawn by encouraging shallow roots. To keep grass healthy, remove no more than one third of the leaf blade when mowing. Keep your blades sharp - dull blades tear and injure grass, and it shows!

Stay hydrated

You have two choices: keep your lawn green this summer with about 1" of water per week (use a rain gauge or tuna can), or let it go dormant. Want to conserve water? Most healthy lawns can recover from dormancy without watering during the drought period. Contact Franklin Soil and Water to see if you qualify for a free irrigation sensor.

Leaf it on your lawn

You can save time and provide nutrients for your lawn by mulching leaves in the fall. Shredded leaf material blocks weeds and breaks down fast into free fertilizer! This means less time and money you have to spend on your lawn. Do your part by keeping leaves and grass out of your street where they can clog storm drains and feed algae.

Fertilizer for Dummies

Grass isn't concrete - It's a plant in your managed landscape that benefits from a low level of supplemental nutrients. Dense blades and deep roots trap more rainwater and hold soil in place. Follow all label instructions closely and keep fertilizer off of hard surfaces and away from water. You can reduce fertilizer usage by recycling grass clippings and mulching fall leaves.

Topsoil is king

Good topsoil is the foundation for a healthy lawn, but many new homes have had their topsoil compacted and removed during construction, leaving behind debris and clay. These lawns soak up little water and require more fertilizer and pesticides. To slowly improve topsoil so your grass grows better, add organic materials like lawn clippings and mulched leaves.

Events and Outreach

Outreach opportunities include educational programming where Franklin Soil and Water is hosting an event or an attendee; municipal and city-wide outdoor events; and popular special occasions like sales, festivals, or sporting events. Here's where we've reached Columbus residents and professional audiences*.

*Professionals include partners, such as local government representatives, non-profits, or lawn care companies.

Calendar

Events	Date
Hilliard Garden Affair (7)	4/17/2018
Indiana Springs Elementary STEM Night (1)	4/19/2018
Earth Day at the Columbus Zoo (3))	4/21/2018
Earth Day in Downtown Columbus (1)	4/22/2018
Earth Day in Hilliard	4/22/2018
Columbus Public Health Lawnmower Exchange (20)	4/28/2018
Hilliard Community Backyards	5/2/2018
Westerville Community Backyards (1)	5/5/2018
FSWCD Community Backyards (12)	7/10/2018
Franklin County Fair (12)	7/21/2018
Chadwick Arboretum Open House (3)	7/22/2018
Grove City Ecofest (1)	8/12/2018
FSWCD Community Backyards Workshop (15)	9/8/2018
Dublin-Oakland Nursery Fall Festival	10/14/2018
MORPC Summit on Sustainability	10/25/2018
Ohio Turf grass Foundation (Tradeshow)	12/4/2018
<i>76 paper pledges collected at events</i>	

Columbus Public Health Lawnmower Exchange event accepts old, gas-powered mowers when residents purchase an electric mower for a reduced price.

Pictured left to right: Kori Gasaway (FSWCD), Doug Brownfield (Lowe's), Rick Hicks (Columbus Public Health). They were all cold.



Communications

Get Grassy! is publicized by internally-generated electronic and hard copy newsletters; within workshops and classes led by staff and partner facilitators; through social media; and with paid advertisements. Audiences include Franklin County residents, municipal working partners in surrounding cities, environmental engineering firms, and schoolteachers. Spring, summer, and fall lawn care tips were electronically sent out to partner agencies and lawn care companies to be distributed among their respective audiences and clients.



Pictured above: Spring pledge explosion. There were no reported injuries.

Franklin Soil and Water Publications

Four district-generated publications regularly promote our lawn care program and encourage subscribers to take the pledge. They include Frankly Speaking (distribution 7,810); Urban Review (distribution 980); SWIFT (distribution 458); Update to Partners (distribution 635); and E-Frankly Speaking/Backyard Conservation Update (distribution 4,285). Franklin Soil and Water social media posts focused on *Get Grassy* reached 1,124 users.

Lawn Care Company Customers

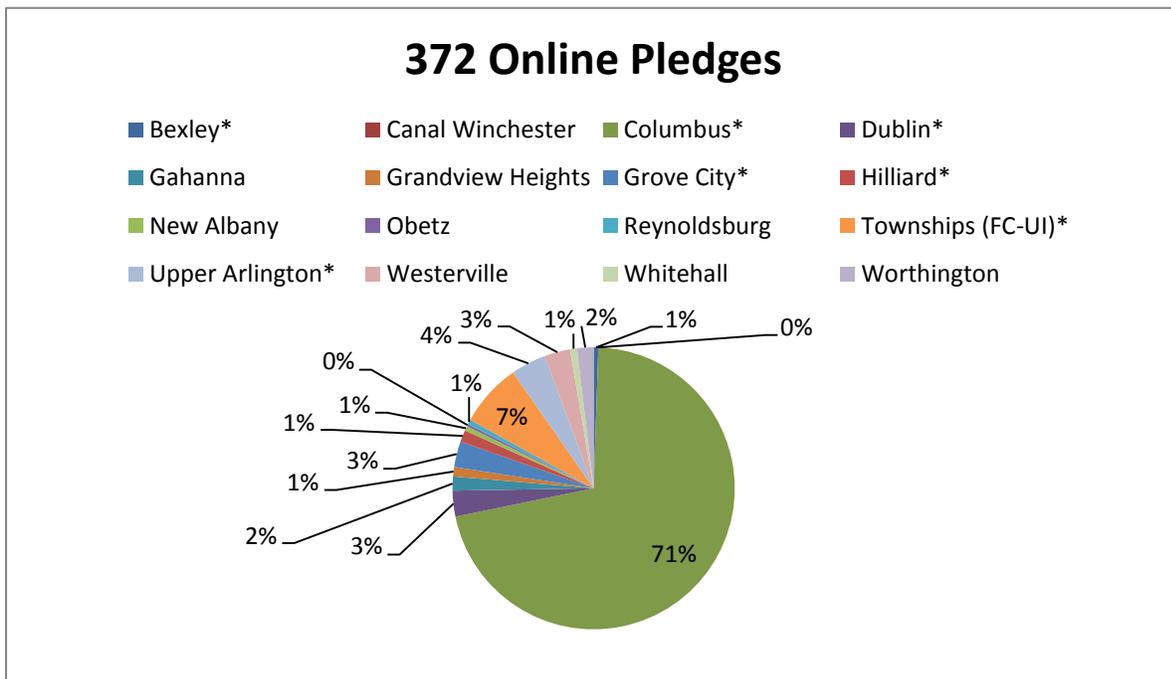
A “hot card” featuring logos of partnering companies is distributed among their customers with regular site visits. It helps promote best-management practices among employees, and reinforces company environmental stewardship with customers. We created custom lawn care cards for several municipalities including New Albany’s “Sustainable Lawncare” and Bexley’s. Our partner lawn care companies have a potential audience of about 40,000! We printed and distributed 8,450 hot cards to our lawn care and nursery partners in 2018.

Special Events

Our final Backyards class was coupled with an extended lawn care portion on September 8th, 2018 with the help of Good Nature Organic Lawn Care and Trugreen. We had 17 attendees, and Good Day Columbus featured the class on a Good Day Marketplace segment that aired September 13th, 2018. ABC 6’s estimated coverage map covers 21 Central Ohio counties.



Online Pledge Form Data and Insights



Community	Pledges
Bexley*	2
Canal Winchester	0
Columbus*	265
Dublin*	11
Gahanna	6
Grandview Heights	4
Grove City*	11
Hilliard*	5
New Albany	2
Obetz	1
Reynoldsburg	2
Townships (FC-UI)*	27
Upper Arlington*	15
Westerville	11
Whitehall	3
Worthington	7
Total Participants:	372

*grant communities

Total	Pledges
Franklin County Participants:	372
Outside Franklin County:	8
Outside State of Ohio	
Total Participation:	380

Source of Pledge	
Online	302
Event	76
Mail in	2
Total Participation inc outside cty	380

Yearly Comparison

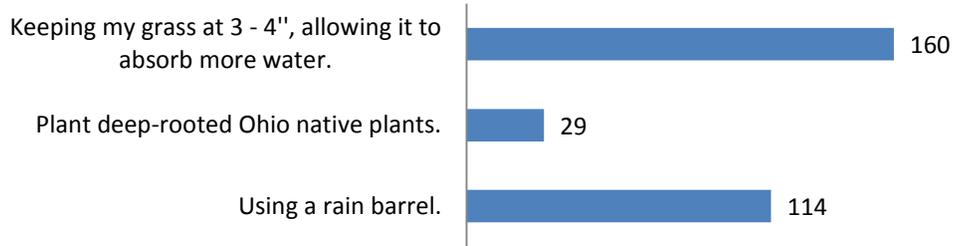
2016: 384 (256 online, 128 paper)

2017: 274 (213 online, 61 paper)

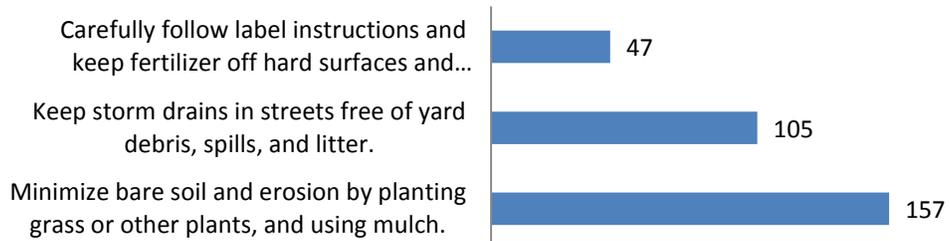
2018: 372 (302 online, 70 paper)

*1,000+ households directly engaged in 3 years;
approximately 4,000 estimated annual reach*

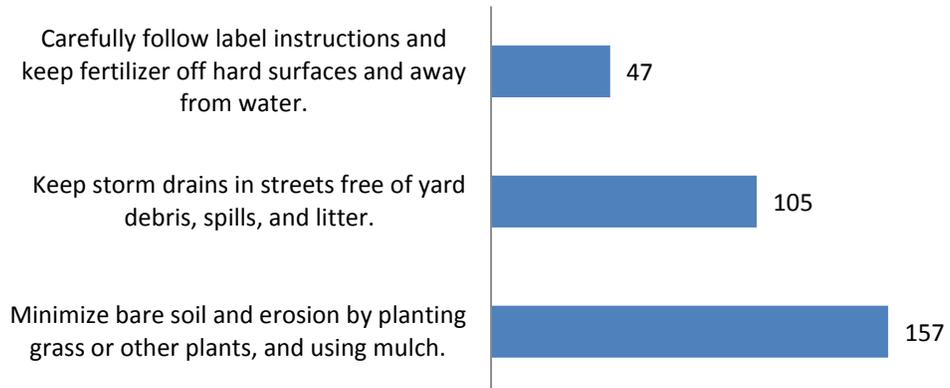
I will keep rain on my property by:



I will keep my lawn healthy by:



I will keep pollution out of streams by:



We ask participants to “pledge” to a specific behavior on our website. Personal commitments are a community-based social marketing tool that can contribute to long-term behavioral change. The pledge data is collected and residents receive a thank-you, seasonal lawn care tips, enrollment into regular a gift-card drawing, and an opportunity to sign up for our newsletters.

Some **online queries** such as this one (right) are optional-answer. The majority of participants does not use a lawn care service, and were not reached through it.

Do you use a lawn care company?

No	249
Yes (see below)	55

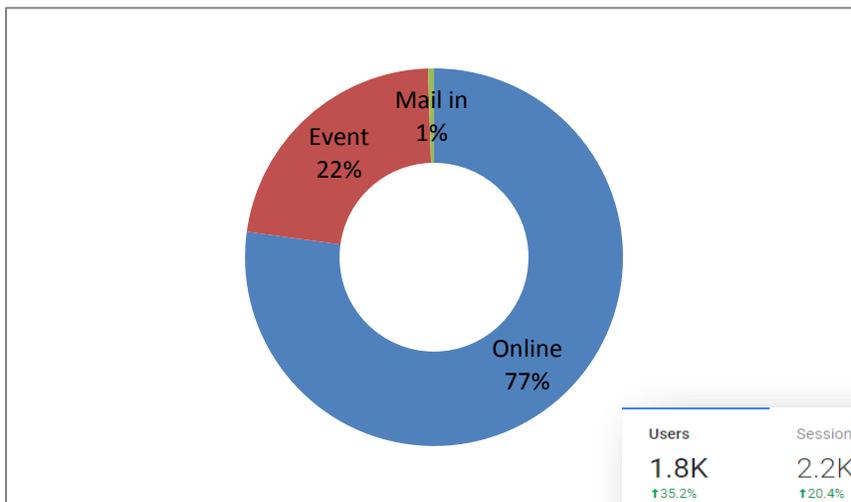
Lawn Care Partnering Companies

Good Nature Organic Lawn Care	11
TruGreen	9
Watershed Organic	1
Biogreen Ohio	2

Others

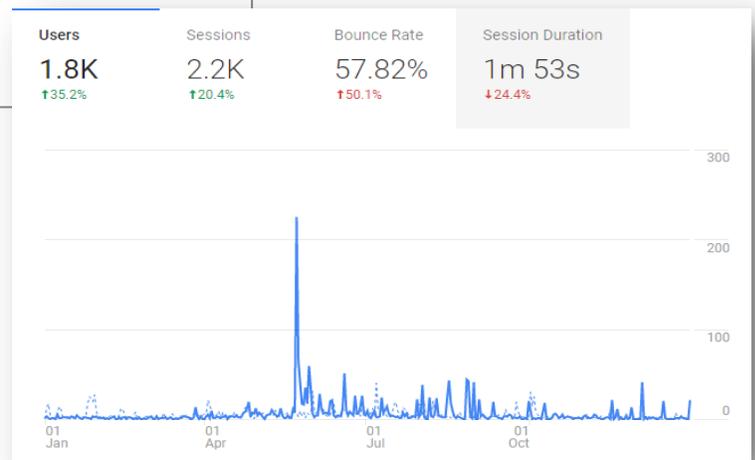
Misc. lawn care companies	30
WeedMan	4
Landlord/HOA	4
NexGreen	4

Website



Close to 80% of pledges were taken online. Online respondents mostly selected the “other” category when asked how they heard about the program, with City mailers and GreenSpot Household eNewsletter popular pledge-generators.

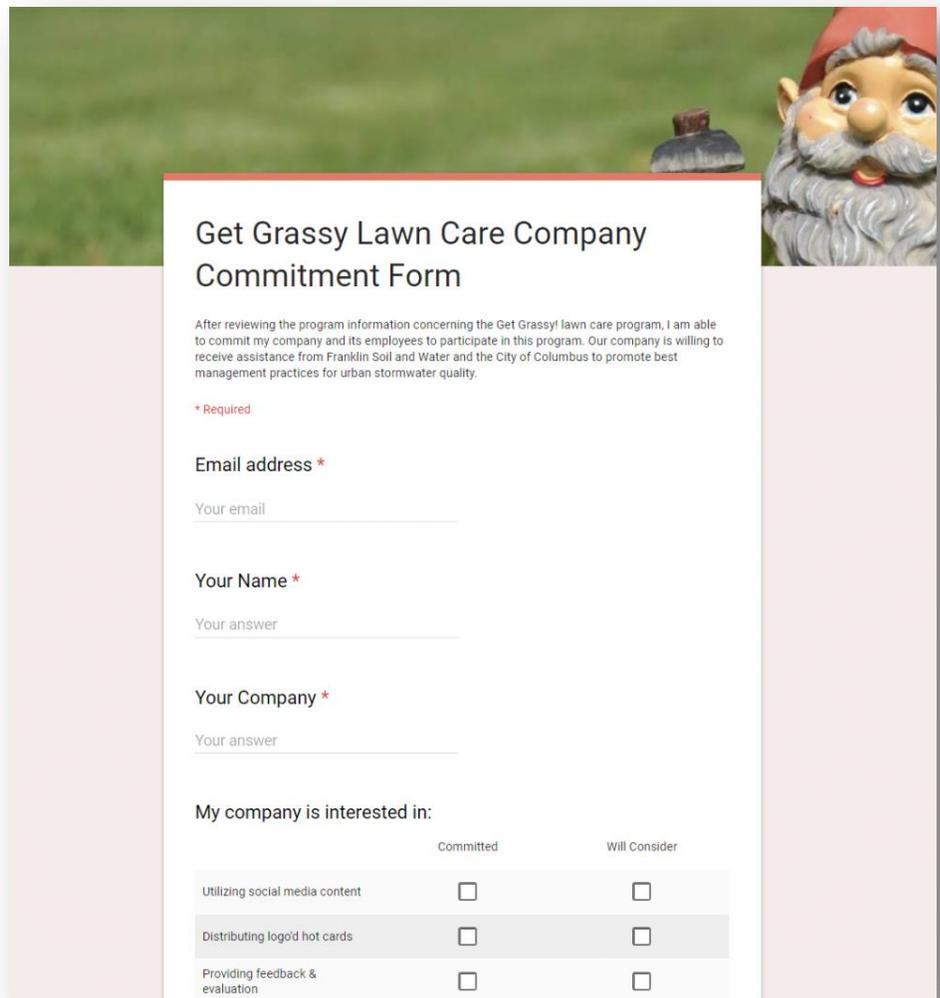
Getgrassy.org received about 1,800 views in 2018, up 35% from 2017.



Future considerations/suggestions

The lawn care program is explicitly mentioned in the [Columbus Climate Adaptation Plan](#). Its recommendations include collaboration with “other environmental and outdoor organizations with similar missions (e.g., National Audubon Society’s Audubon At Home and the NWF’s Certified Wildlife Habitat). FSWCD will continue to engage current and future lawn care companies, and work closely with the City of Columbus to identify new engagement opportunities.

Right: Online form allows easy feedback and ensures we are getting what partners what they need.



Get Grassy Lawn Care Company Commitment Form

After reviewing the program information concerning the Get Grassy! lawn care program, I am able to commit my company and its employees to participate in this program. Our company is willing to receive assistance from Franklin Soil and Water and the City of Columbus to promote best management practices for urban stormwater quality.

* Required

Email address *

Your email

Your Name *

Your answer

Your Company *

Your answer

My company is interested in:

	Committed	Will Consider
Utilizing social media content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distributing logo'd hot cards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing feedback & evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>