

Fertilizer Pollution

A GROWING PROBLEM

How could a green, flourishing lawn pose a threat to the environment? **The fertilizers you apply to your lawn are potential pollutants.** If applied improperly or in excess, fertilizer can be washed off your yard and end up in lakes and streams. This causes algae to grow, which uses up oxygen that fish need to survive.

FERTILIZER CHECKLIST

*How to fertilize your yard
without polluting our waters.*

- ☑ **Use Sparingly:** Many plants don't need fertilizer as much or as often as you may think.
- ☑ **Don't Fertilize Before a Rain Storm:** It will just wash away, not helping your yard and hurting the environment.
- ☑ **Use Organic:** They release nutrients more slowly.
- ☑ **Test Your Soil:** Have your soil tested before applying fertilizers to your lawn and gardens. You may find you don't need to add fertilizer at all. Learn more at soiltest.umass.edu
- ☑ **Dispose of Yard Waste:** Lawn clippings are stormwater pollutants too. Please dispose of them properly – leave grass clippings on the lawn, compost them or use as mulch.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH FERTILIZERS?

Fertilizer can become a problem for lakes, rivers, and streams, if it's not used carefully. If you use too much fertilizer or apply it at the wrong time, it can easily wash off your lawn or garden into storm drains and then flow into lakes or streams. Just like in your garden, fertilizer in lakes and streams makes plants grow, leading to **algal growth in water bodies and problems for aquatic animals.**

WHAT CAN I DO?

In recent years, as water pollution from factories has been greatly reduced, **more than 60% of water pollution comes from stormwater runoff**, which picks up pollutants like leaking oil from cars, fertilizers from farms, lawns and gardens, and failing septic tanks. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water - careful application of fertilizer is a great start!

