

Fertilizer: A “Growing” Stormwater Problem

Remember, when you fertilize your lawn, you’re not just fertilizing your lawn.



It's hard to imagine that a green, flourishing lawn could pose a threat to the environment, but the fertilizers you apply to your lawn are potential pollutants!

- ❖ If you use too much fertilizer or apply it at the wrong time, it can wash off your lawn or garden into storm drains, which flow into streams and wetlands without any treatment!
- ❖ But why is it a problem? Just like in your garden, fertilizer in wetlands and streams makes plants grow. In water bodies, extra fertilizer can mean extra algae and aquatic plant growth.
- ❖ Too much algae causes water quality problems that make boating, fishing, and swimming unpleasant. As algae decays, it uses up oxygen in the water that fish and other wildlife need. It can even make the water an unattractive green color.

What can you do to help?



Use fertilizer sparingly. Many plants don't need as much fertilizer or need it as often as you think.



Don't fertilize before it rains. Rain will wash that newly applied fertilizer away.



Consider using organic fertilizers. They release nutrients more slowly.



Have your soil tested before applying fertilizers to your lawn and gardens. A standard soil test costs \$15. You may not need to add any fertilizer. To order a soil test or for more information contact the UMass Extension Soil Testing Lab at 413-545-2311 or visit <http://soiltest.umass.edu/ordering-information>.



For more information, visit the Town website or thinkbluemassachusetts.com