

Spring Landscaping Tips For Businesses

Help Keep Our Waterways Clean!

Healthy Lawns – Healthy Water

Use Zero-Phosphorus Lawn Fertilizer! It's the Law!

Phosphorus runoff poses a threat to water quality. Therefore, under Massachusetts Law, phosphorus-containing fertilizer may only be applied to lawn or non-agricultural turf when:

- a soil test indicates that additional phosphorus is needed for the growth of that lawn or non-agricultural turf; or
- is used for newly established lawn or non-agricultural turf during the first growing season.

Most lawns in Massachusetts do not need additional phosphorus for healthy growth.

Look for the “Zero” to Protect Our Waters



Check the fertilizer bag for a set of three numbers representing the percentage of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K). Buy the bag with a “0” in the middle: Zero Phosphorus!

If your lawn requires fertilizer, you can still help reduce water pollution by:

- Using phosphorus-free and/or slow-release fertilizers
- Do not over apply – follow instructions on the bag
- Don't apply pesticides or fertilizer if rain is forecasted
- Never store or dump yard waste in or around waterways, wetlands, or storm drains
- Leave grass clippings in your lawn as natural fertilizer or compost yard waste in an area away from storm drains and wetlands (minimum 100 ft)
- Sweep parking lots regularly
- Never stockpile material on top of storm drains. Keep storm drains clear of debris, including dirt, grass clippings, landscaping materials, and other yard waste

When it rains, fertilizer and other pollutants from our lawns are washed into our storm drains where it flows directly – and untreated – into nearby rivers, lakes, and streams.

Phosphorus, commonly found in fertilizers, can cause toxic algae blooms, making it unsafe to swim and killing fish and other aquatic life.

Many people follow the same lawn care routine without really understanding what their lawn needs to be healthy. For example, your soil may already have plenty of nutrients in it for making the grass green and doesn't require additional fertilizer. Unless you or your landscaper is testing the soil, you really don't know what your lawn needs, and you could be using chemicals unnecessarily - and wasting your money.

How to Test Your Soil

Inexpensive soil tests are available through UMass Amherst's Soil Testing Lab. Detailed test results include customized fertilizer recommendations, tailored to the nutrient levels in your specific soil. Soil samples can be mailed or hand delivered. **Additional soil testing information is available at:** www.ag.umass.edu/services/soil-plant-nutrient-testing-laboratory

Landscaped Areas:

- Ensure landscape contractors are properly disposing of landscape waste. Encourage mulching grass clippings and leaves, and to never dump waste into the wetlands; this harms water quality.
- Phosphorus and nitrogen, found in fertilizers and pesticides are harmful. Tell your contractor to protect water quality by using pesticides and fertilizers sparingly or not at all; and to spot treat trouble areas with pesticides, but never use pesticides near wetlands or water.
- By state law, **fertilizer may not generally be used within 20' of wetlands or waterbodies, or 100' of a surface water sources for public drinking water supply**. Remember to sweep up the driveway and sidewalk to insure none enters the storm drain.
- Before you begin to irrigate, keep in mind that just one inch of water per week from rain/irrigation is enough to keep a lawn green. The best time to water is early morning.
- To avoid water loss, evaporation, and runoff: avoid irrigating when it's windy, and make sure that sprinkler heads are pointed at the lawn and not the pavement - adjust and fix heads as necessary.

If you have questions or concerns, please email stormwater@ChelmsfordMA.gov or call: 978-250-5228 ext 5235

More tips at <http://www.townofchelmsford.us/375/Stormwater>
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