

Brought to you by the **Town of Auburn Stormwater Committee**  
104 Central Street, Auburn MA 01501

# When you fertilize the lawn, Remember you're not *just* fertilizing the 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 applied improperly or in excess, fertilizer can be washed off your property and end up in lakes and streams. This causes algae to grow, which uses up oxygen that fish need to survive. So if you fertilize, please follow directions and use sparingly.



The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, One Winter Street, Boston, MA 02108

## Clean water is important to all of us.

It's up to all of us to make it happen. In recent years, sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced. Now, more than 60 percent of water pollution comes from things like cars leaking oil, fertilizers, and failing septic systems. All of these sources add up to a big pollution problem. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water too—and that adds up to a pollution solution!

## Why do we need clean water?

Having clean water is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean water provides recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, drinking water, and adds beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water—and all of us have a role in getting and keeping our lakes, rivers, streams, marine, and ground waters clean.

## What's the problem with fertilizers?

Fertilizer is a “growing” problem for lakes, rivers, and streams, especially 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. In water bodies, extra fertilizer can mean extra algae and aquatic plant growth. Too much algae causes water quality problems and makes boating, fishing, and swimming unpleasant. As algae decay, it uses up oxygen in the water that fish and other wildlife need.

For more information,  
contact the Town's  
Stormwater Committee  
at (508) 832-7728



## Clean Water Tips: How can you fertilize and help keep our water clean?

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

Don't fertilize before a heavy rain storm.

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 \$9.00. You may not need to add any fertilizer. (Call the UMass Extension Soil Testing Lab at (413)545-2311 or download a soil test order form at [www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest](http://www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest).)

*To find out more about the impacts of nonpoint source pollution and what you can do to prevent it, call the numbers listed below.*

*This information on nonpoint source pollution is brought to you by the Department of Environmental Protection, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' Massachusetts Watershed Initiative, Coastal Zone Management, the Department of Environmental Management, the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Law Enforcement, the Department of Food and Agriculture, and the Metropolitan District Commission working to reduce nonpoint source pollution through public education. This project was funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with a federal 104(b)(3) grant.*