

ECO-FRIENDLY LAWN CARE TIPS

As spring and summer lawn care activities swing into high gear in the watershed, there are many easy things you can do to help protect water quality and still maintain a perfectly green lawn.

One of the most important is selecting a phosphorous-free fertilizer, which is available at many nurseries and hardware stores. Studies of our local lakes and streams indicate that lawn fertilizer is one of the largest sources of pollution. Fertilizers containing even small amounts of phosphorous promote growth of harmful algae and other aquatic plants that degrade water quality.

Here are some easy tips:

- ❖ Have your soil tested to see if it even needs fertilizer.
- ❖ Select a phosphorous-free fertilizer. The middle number should be 0.
- ❖ Use the smallest amount necessary. The average lawn is overloaded with 10 times as many chemical pesticides and fertilizers per acre as typical farmland.
- ❖ Do not apply fertilizer right before it rains, as it will wash into the water.
- ❖ Leave grass clippings on the lawn to help retain moisture and provide vital nutrients.
- ❖ Allow grass height to be up to 3 inches high. This allows greener, healthier growth and will help reduce the need for fertilizer.
- ❖ If you live on a lake or stream, leave natural vegetation along the shoreline. Trees, shrubs and flowers filter pollutants and reduce erosion. Natural vegetation costs 48 percent less to maintain than traditional landscaping!
- ❖ Plant a greenbelt garden between your lawn and the water to complement natural vegetation. Use mostly native plants, which have longer roots to absorb more runoff and pollutants. They also reduce erosion and require little if any fertilizers, pesticides and maintenance. Some varieties include Purple Coneflower, Black-Eyed Susans, Dwarf Lilacs, River Birch and Juniper.