



Feed Your Lawn

Not Your River

We all want green lawns, However, when we fertilize our lawns we're probably also fertilizing our rivers. Unfortunately, that's part of the problem.

Unless you're using an organic fertilizer, odds are you're using a petroleum-based, synthetic fertilizer. Those are a major source of water pollution.

The nitrogen and phosphorus in those fertilizers feed our lawns. However, eventually those same nutrients become pollutants in the river when they are applied in excess. That can lead to harmful algal growth.

That algal growth can discolor the water and increase organic matter. As this excessive organic matter dies, it uses up oxygen in the water. This leads to fish kills where large numbers of fish die. It also creates an attractive climate for jellyfish, which do not need a lot of oxygen to survive.

Certain harmful algal blooms release powerful toxins that can kill fish, shellfish and plants. They can also raise the cost of treatment for drinking water and even be deadly to animals and humans.

Flip this flyer around to see what you can do to have your lawn, and your river too.

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Photo courtesy of Washington State Department of Ecology

Fun Fertilizer Facts

Those lush lawns are so pretty and they're great to roll around on, but making them super green can have a downside. Here is what you can do to clean your river.

- **Choose a no phosphorus, slow-release fertilizer without weedkiller.** Check the first and second number on the package for nitrogen and phosphate content. Formula, 26-0-3, for example, means no phosphate. Consider using an organic fertilizer which is naturally slow-release and also builds soil.
- **Fertilize just twice per year.** For a healthier, greener lawn, fertilize after the first lawn cutting in the spring and again in the fall when weather conditions are best for grass to absorb nutrients.
- **Avoid overuse.** Apply fertilizer at the spreader setting shown on the bag. Return unused fertilizer to the container for future use.
- **Check the weather.** Do not apply fertilizer before a heavy rain, as it will wash off your lawn.
- **Keep it on your lawn.** Use a drop spreader or a rotary spreader with a side guard to keep fertilizer on the lawn and off driveways, roadways and walkways. Sweep up excess fertilizer from paved surfaces.
- **Test your soil.** Soil tests can help identify what nutrients your lawn needs. Contact your County Extension Agent for details.
- **Reduce the size of your lawn.** Use ground cover, trees, shrubs or other plantings to reduce your lawnscape, thus reducing your need for fertilizer.
- **Use less water.** Overwatering washes the nutrients into the rivers. Water in the mornings or evenings to avoid evaporation loss, and never use lawn sprinklers in the rain.
- **Know the law.** In New Jersey it's against the law to fertilize between Nov. 15 and March 1.
- **Leave a "Ring of Responsibility."** That means staying at least 10 feet from a waterway when fertilizing.

**Make Your Lawn Green
While Keeping Your River Clean**

If we all do our part, we can clean up our rivers.



The American Littoral Society

Headquartered at Sandy Hook, the American Littoral Society has been protecting the coastal environment since 1961. For more information about the Society and its works, to join, donate, or volunteer, please go to www.littoralsociety.org, call 732-291-0055 or email us at info@littoralsociety.org