A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO WATERSHED FRIENDLY LAWN FERTILIZER

CLINTON RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

Over-fertilizing is a problem contributing to stormwater pollution in the Clinton River. Without realizing it, many landowners are applying fertilizers and pesticides when their lawns don't even need them! When applying fertilizer, it's important to know when it is needed and when it is not in order to avoid the excess fertilizer from entering the stormdrains and negatively affecting water quality.

DON'T GUESS... SOIL TEST!

Don't assume your plants need fertilizer. Perform a soil test. You'll save money and reduce the chance of over-applying. Michigan State University Extension offers easy-to-use soil nutrient testing boxes, and recommends a soil test every two or three years.

To find out more, check out:

Macomb County http://www.macombcountymi.gov/msuextension/
Oakland County http://www.oakgov.com/msu/
Clinton River Watershed council http://www.crwc.org

HOW OFTEN, HOW MUCH?

It is possible to have a beautiful lawn by fertilizing only two or three times a year, or even not at all.

If you find you need to fertilize, you may choose to…

Apply twice a year: in late spring (late April or early May) and fall (September or October).

OR

Apply three times a year: in late spring (Memorial Day), early fall (Labor Day) and late fall (Thanksgiving)

Pointers for Pesticide Use

Correct watering, mowing and fertilizing habits can reduce many pest problems. But if you do choose to treat for insects, it is essential that you know your enemy before you apply pesticides! If possible, hand-pick the little buggers off the plants and identify the pest. The important part is to identify and treat only for the pests you have, at their most vulnerable stage.

For help identifying the bug that's been bugging you, check out the Michigan State University Pest Diagnostic website: www.pestid.msu.edu/

A general spraying of insecticide is ineffective, costly and may do more harm than good.

CHOOSING THE CORRECT FERTILIZER...

Use slow-release nitrogen fertilizers that provide a slow, steady source of nutrients for plants as well as low or **no** phosphorus fertilizers to help improve water quality. This also prevents the big spurt of growth common with synthetic fertilizers. Avoid "weed-and-feed" mixtures. These contain herbicides to control weed growth and are often applied where they aren't needed.

EARTH-FRIENDLY FERTILIZERS

FOR WATER QUALITY PROTECTION – MARCH 2016

Recommended by SOCWA Healthy Lawns and Gardens Technical Advisory Committee

Criteria for designation as an earth-friendly fertilizer:

Low-phosphorus or no-phosphorus:

- Zero phosphorus
- Low-phosphorus manure or composted manure as defined in the Michigan Fertilizer Act

Slow-release nitrogen:

- Natural organic fertilizer; or
- Synthetic fertilizer with 40% or more water insoluble nitrogen (WIN). Or 40% of another controlled-release component

Fertilizers that are free of all pesticides including herbicides: no weed-and-feed.

BRAND NAME	N-P-K	% Slow-Release Nitrogen
ACO Fall Lawn Food	21-0-4	50%
Espoma Organic Lawn Food	9-0-0	84%
Fertrell Lawn Fertilizer – Custom Blend	5-0-5	70%
Grass Magic	15-0-7	70%
Jonathan Green Organic Lawn Fertilizer	10-0-1	95%
Safer Lawn Restore	10-0-6	76%
Milorganite	5-2-0	66%
Soil Science	5-0-7	High
Turf Nurture (small bag only)	15-0-7	75%
CORN GLUTEN PRODUCTS:		
Bradford Organics - Luscious Lawn	9-0-0	85%
Espoma Organic Weed Preventer	9-0-0	91%
Jonathan Green Organic Weed Control	9-0-0	76%
Organica Lawn Booster	8-0-1	94%
Safe Lawn	9-0-0	91%

THE STATE OF MICHIGAN PHOSPHORUS FERTILIZER RESTRICTIONS FOR LAWNS

As of January 1, 2012, home and commercial lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus are subject to certain restrictions.

A person shall not apply any fertilizer with available phosphate (P2O5) to turf. Available phosphate may be applied at specified rates under the following instances:

When a soil test or plant tissue test indicates phosphorus is needed;

For new turf establishment using seed or sod;

A finished sewage sludge (biosolid), organic manure or a manipulated manure (like compost). The application rate is limited to 0.25 pounds of phosphorus per 1,000 square feet.

On golf courses whose manager(s) have completed a Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) approved training program.

Local phosphorus fertilizer ordinances in existence before December 16, 2010 are grandfathered in.

Fertilizer cannot be applied to frozen soil or soil saturated with water.

Any fertilizer released onto a hard surface, such as a sidewalk or driveway must be cleaned up promptly.

The other phosphorus provisions in Public Act 299 include new definitions, setbacks from surface water, $50 civil fines and outreach information.

For additional information, see www.michigan.gov/mda-fertilizer.

SOCWA Healthy Lawn Care Information
www.socwa.org/lawns_gardens.shtml

MSU Phosphorus Smart Tip Card
www.BePhosphorusSmart.msu.edu

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