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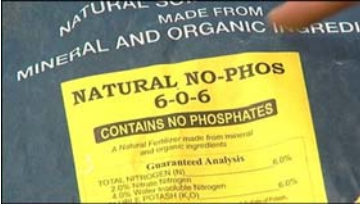
## SPECIAL REPORT

**It's Easy Being Green, Part 2**

*Burlington, Vermont - May 14, 2008*

On a clear day Lake Champlain appears a brilliant blue.

But could that change because of efforts to keep lawns green?



"If you're putting something like too much phosphorus fertilizer on your lawn, it can end up in the lake. It might make your lawn really green, but it makes the lake green and feeds the algae in the lake," explains Nicole Ballinger of the Lake Champlain Basin Program.



The Lake Champlain Basin Program wants people to think of their lawns as "green" in a different way-- an environmentally friendly way. That's because chemicals washed off the lawn end up in tributaries and eventually, Lake Champlain.



"It's definitely the greatest contributor of pollution to the lake. We have some surveys that say 40% of people do fertilize their lawns. It's quite a few people out there that can make a difference," says Ballinger.

People can make a difference and save a few bucks by not buying fertilizer, the state Agriculture Department says most lawns don't need it unless a soil test says they do. And if they need fertilizer, use one without phosphorus. The cost isn't much different than other fertilizers-- but you can save something more important.



"It's just a way to ensure you're not going to create potentially more phosphorus runoff," explains Ballinger.

"And if you don't need it, why put it on anyway?"

Now that your lawn is growing, you've got to cut it back. A Vergennes company says it has an answer that's easy on the planet and the wallet. Its name: the Neuton. The battery-powered lawnmower doesn't use gasoline or oil.

"A gasoline powered machine is going to spit out 87 pounds of a greenhouse gas, CO2, every year and 54 pounds of other pollutants. A Neuton has zero emissions," says Neuton sales manager Tom Hughes.

The Neuton has been available for about ten years. But the company says demand is now growing as quickly as the grass.

"This year we're seeing a lot of people considering buying a Neuton because of the cost of gas," notes Hughes.

The Neuton itself isn't cheap-- they run from \$379 to \$479. But Hughes says the

Neuton will save people money in the long run.

"When you're talking about \$3.60 for a tank of gas and you can charge a Neuton on 10 cents worth of electricity, people are taking notice."

Say you mow your lawn for an hour once a week for 28 weeks, using half a gallon of gas each time.

At \$3.60 a gallon, that adds up to \$50 a season.

Charging a Neuton battery 28 times will cost \$2.80. And it doesn't need oil, spark plugs or a tune-up.

On to the garden, where growing your own vegetables can be healthier for you-- and healthier for the planet, too.

"I think growing vegetables is a great way to take responsibility for what you can do in terms of being green in your own backyard," says Kathy LaLiberte, director of gardening for Gardeners' Supply at the Intervale in Burlington.

LaLiberte says most people plant their own vegetables for the joy it brings them, not an economic payoff.

But a little digging here can save you from digging deeper into your pockets at the grocery store, where organic vegetables grown without chemical pesticides or fertilizers add up.

"Some of the vegetables that are going to save you the most amount of money in a small garden are I think, onions," says LaLiberte. "The same with garlic, shallots. All very easy to grow and tend to be somewhat expensive in the market."

And if you fertilize your garden with compost, you can save money over chemical fertilizers.

Make that compost yourself with recycled food waste, and the cost is free.

"It's keeping those kitchen scraps out of the waste stream, instead of going to the landfill; you're keeping them at home and taking responsibility for them yourself. The end product of composting is a nutritious food source for your plants," says LaLiberte.

But because compost has phosphorus, you don't want to put that all over your lawn.

The [Lake Champlain Basin Program](#) has a few more suggestions for keeping the environment clean and saving money when you're caring for your own outdoor environment.

For example, leave grass clippings on the lawn so they'll return their nutrients to the soil for a fertilizer that won't cost you anything.

If you leave your grass a little longer, say 3 or 4 inches, it will help keep weeds away and be more drought-resistant.

And water the lawn in the morning, not in the hot afternoon sun. That way less water will evaporate. Or wait for the rain, which adds nothing to your water bill.

[Kate Duffy](#) - WCAX News

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