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## Don't 'P' on the lawn

*By Candace Page, Free Press Staff Writer*

While the Burlington Board of Health has focused on reducing use of chemical pesticides, advocates for a healthier Lake Champlain say there is another lawn care product homeowners should avoid: phosphorus fertilizer.

Many lawns do need a yearly dose of nitrogen to stay green and healthy, experts say, but most Champlain Valley soils have sufficient phosphorus to grow good grass without adding chemical fertilizer.

In a campaign called "Don't P on the lawn," lake groups urge homeowners to purchase phosphorus-free fertilizer unless a soil test shows a need for it. Phosphorus-free lawn products can be purchased at a number of lawn-and-garden stores in the Champlain Valley.

When buying, those who chose to use packaged fertilizer should look for the prominently displayed numbers that show the nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium content. Look for fertilizer with zero as the middle number, 22-0-15, for example.

Phosphorus is considered the major pollutant of concern in Lake Champlain, where it feeds the growth of water weeds and noxious algae blooms. Runoff from city and suburban lawns contributes to the problem.

To learn more about the campaign, and find a list of stores selling phosphorus-free fertilizer, go to [www.lawntolake.org](http://www.lawntolake.org).

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