

LAWN TO LAKE

LAWN CARE TIPS FOR GREEN LAWNs NOT GREEN LAKES!

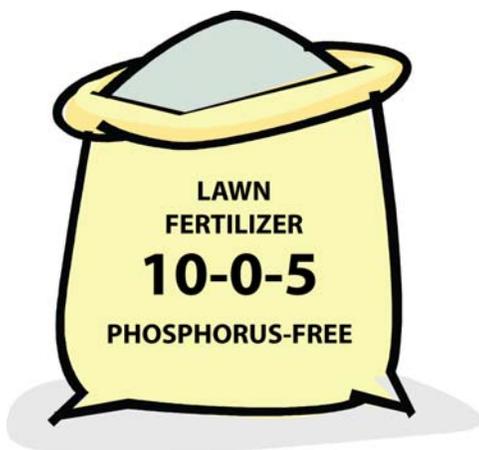
Don't "P" On Your Lawn – Retailer Fact Sheet

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM?

The purpose of this program is to encourage homeowners to switch to **phosphorus-free (P-free)** lawn fertilizers and to help retailers meet consumer needs by providing informational resources to them. The "Don't P on Your Lawn" campaign was started in 2007 by a several nonprofit groups and agencies concerned about the water quality of Lake Champlain and other rivers and lakes in Vermont and upstate New York. The groups involved are: Cornell Cooperative Extension, Lake Champlain Committee, Lake Champlain Basin Program, Regional Stormwater Education Program, Lake Champlain Sea Grant/UVM Extension, and Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. Visit <http://www.lawntolake.org/about.htm> for contact information.

HOW DO I BENEFIT AS A RETAILER?

You benefit by positioning your store as a concerned member of the community that is interested in local water quality issues. The program will provide you with free brochures, posters, and buttons to help you sell P-free fertilizer products. All you have to do is commit to selling P-free products, in addition to your usual fertilizer products. We also help stores by listing those that sell P-free products on the website, www.lawntolake.org/buy.htm. As of April 2009, more than 50 local stores in Vermont and upstate New York have agreed to sell P-free products.



HOW CAN I DETERMINE IF A PRODUCT IS PHOSPHORUS-FREE (P-FREE)?

All fertilizer bags must show their N-P-K (Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium) nutrient analysis by a series of numbers like 10-0-5. The middle number is the phosphate (phosphorus) content. A "zero" in the middle means it is phosphorus-free. Lawns rarely need extra potassium (K), but adding some does not affect water quality.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH PHOSPHORUS?

In cities and suburbs, the incremental runoff of the nutrient phosphorus (P) from sources like lawn fertilizer—whether organic or conventional—is a serious concern because it feeds algae and weeds in waterways. About half of Lake Champlain's phosphorus problem is from developed land, such as lawns.

When it rains, paved roads, sidewalks and roofs rush pollutants into storm drains that lead to waterways. Research suggests that just one pound of phosphorus can feed 300-500 pounds of algae in a water body. While most algae blooms are generally harmless to humans, decomposing algae and weeds take up oxygen in the water that is vital to fish and other animals. Furthermore, algae and weeds discourage swimmers, anglers, and boaters—and even lower property values. Phosphorus also feeds toxic blooms of blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) that are occasionally found in the parts of Lake Champlain. In recent summers, algae blooms have caused beach closings and health alerts in parts of northern Lake Champlain. Homeowners can help by switching to **phosphorus-free (P-free)** fertilizers.

DON'T LAWNS NEED PHOSPHORUS?

Most do not! Most northeastern lawns and 75% of Chittenden County, Vermont lawns tested by the University of Vermont had enough phosphorus (P) and only need nitrogen (N). A soil survey of St. Albans, VT also showed excessive levels of phosphorus there. Similar results have been found for upstate New York. Phosphorus is generally only needed when a new lawn is seeded. If a homeowner still feels they may need phosphorus, a soil test is recommended.

WHERE CAN MY CUSTOMERS GET SOIL TESTS?

- Cornell, NY Nutrient Analysis Labs: (607) 255-4540
- University of Vermont Extension: (802) 656-3030

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER HEALTHY LAWN TIPS?

In addition to using P-free products, we encourage homeowners to adopt these other practices for “Green Lawns, NOT Green Lakes!”

TAKE A SOIL TEST...

- If you are seeding a new lawn, or want to learn more about your lawn’s nutrient content, pH level and organic content.

WATER...

- If desired, in early morning, when there is less than 1 inch/week of rain. Grass will survive droughts without watering by going dormant.

PLANT GRASS SEED...

- On existing lawns in the fall and spring to out compete weeds.
- Use a grass mixture that does well in the setting (soil, light, activity).
- Leave legumes, such as common white clover, among the grass to add nitrogen, which will naturally fertilize your lawn.

MOW...

- To maintain a height of 3 to 4 inches and cut off no more than 1/3 of grass blade. Leave clippings on lawn to add nutrients and organic matter, but be sure to sweep the clippings off pavement.

WEEDS...

- Will be discouraged by following these healthy lawn tips! Just pull any that are left by hand.

HOW CAN I ORDER MORE DON'T P BROCHURES?

Please contact either the Lake Champlain Basin Program: 802-372-3213 or Lake Champlain Committee: 802-658-1414 or email: lawn@lawntolake.org with your name and address.