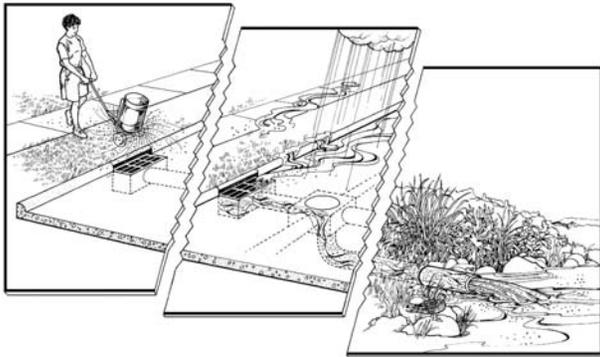


# What is Phosphorus?

Phosphorus (P) is one of the most troublesome pollutants in stormwater runoff. It is the primary cause of water quality problems in Lake Champlain and many other local lakes and rivers. About half of Lake Champlain's phosphorus problem comes from neighborhoods and cities.

Phosphorus is found in lawn and garden fertilizers, manure, as well as human and animal waste. Too much phosphorus in water feeds algal blooms and weed growth.

These plants and the water quality problems that occur when they decompose can harm fish and other animals and limit everyone's use and enjoyment of the water.



Credit: U. of Wisconsin

**When it rains, fertilizer and other pollutants from lawns are washed into storm drains that empty into lakes and rivers.**

# Resources

## Phosphorus-free fertilizer:

Learn about P-free lawn care at [www.lawntolake.org](http://www.lawntolake.org).

## Soil testing:

- University of Vermont Extension  
(802) 656-3030 or [pss.uvm.edu/ag\\_testing/?Page=soils.html](http://pss.uvm.edu/ag_testing/?Page=soils.html)
- Cornell Nutrient Analysis Labs  
[cna1.cals.cornell.edu](http://cna1.cals.cornell.edu)  
(607) 255-4540

## Lawn care tips, organics and integrated pest management:

- Vermont Extension Master Gardener Helpline  
(800) 639-2230 or [www.uvm.edu/mastergardener](http://www.uvm.edu/mastergardener)
- Cornell Home Gardening  
[blogs.cornell.edu/horticulture/](http://blogs.cornell.edu/horticulture/)
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Growline  
Plattsburgh: (518) 561-7450, Westport:  
(518) 962-4810 or [askMG@cornell.edu](mailto:askMG@cornell.edu)
- Safe Lawns  
[www.safelawns.org](http://www.safelawns.org)

## Stormwater runoff:

- Regional Stormwater Education Program  
[www.smartwaterways.org](http://www.smartwaterways.org)
- Ecosystem Restoration Program  
[www.vtwaterquality.org/erp.htm](http://www.vtwaterquality.org/erp.htm)

## The "Lawn to Lake" Partners:

Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Lake Champlain Basin Program  
Lake Champlain Committee  
Lake Champlain Sea Grant / UVM Extension  
Regional Stormwater Education Program  
VT Agency of Agriculture  
VT Agency of Natural Resources

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# DON'T "P" ON YOUR LAWN!

and other lawn care tips for green lawns, *not* green lakes



**New phosphorus laws in effect for NY and VT\***

**Phosphorus (P) is a plant nutrient found in lawn fertilizer that feeds algal blooms in waterways. Create a beautiful lawn and keep "P" from polluting water by using P-free fertilizers and following these tips...**

LAWN TO LAKE

LAWN CARE TIPS FOR GREEN LAWN'S NOT GREEN LAKES!



Algae blooms like this one on Missisquoi Bay are fed by too much phosphorus.

## How can my lawn help or harm lakes, ponds and rivers?

**Healthy lawns and reducing phosphorus benefit water quality!** If your lawn is bare and patchy, soil and phosphorus run off and pollute local waters. If you use too much fertilizer, it can also run off and feed algal blooms and aquatic weeds.

The solution is to create healthy soil and grass for an attractive *and* lake-friendly lawn. Healthy soils include organic matter and a soil structure that supports a microbe community to help release nutrients and combat fungal pests. To keep grass healthy, don't stress it by over watering or mowing it too short. It will then be better able to tolerate pests and out compete weeds.



Your lawn care affects the health of local water!

**\* New laws in New York and Vermont that took effect January 1, 2012, prohibit the application of phosphorus fertilizers except in certain circumstances. Please visit [www.lawntolake.org](http://www.lawntolake.org) to learn more!**

# HEALTHY LAWN TIPS

for a green lawn, not a green lake!

## 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.

## FERTILIZE...

- Only with **phosphorus-free** fertilizers. Most northeastern lawns and 75% of Chittenden County lawns tested by UVM had enough phosphorus (P) and only need nitrogen (N)!
- Apply fertilizer once/year—the best time for this region is early fall.
- Sweep up fertilizer from sidewalks and driveways. Don't fertilize before heavy rain.

### Look for the Zero!

The three numbers on fertilizer bags show the N-P-K nutrient analysis. 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.



Credit: Metro Watershed Partners

## 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) - region 2.
- 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.