

FERTILIZING YOUR LAWN ALSO FERTILIZES AQUATIC PLANTS AND ALGAE IN LAKE GEORGE

If you live within the Lake George watershed, and especially if you live along the shoreline or along a connecting stream or wetland, fertilizers and pesticides should not be part of your routine lawn care. Fertilizers applied to your lawn not only feed the grass, but they also feed the aquatic plants and algae in Lake George, which degrades water quality. Algae blooms are frequent occurrences throughout the lake, but are regularly found just offshore of properties using lawn care chemicals, both fertilizers and pesticides.

Around Lake George fertilizers used for lawn maintenance are unnecessary. Phosphorus is naturally plentiful in most local soils. Use of fertilizers supplies more phosphorus and other nutrients than can be used. Because of this, fertilizers and chemicals applied to lawns are washed into Lake George with each rain storm, as these nutrients and chemicals remain unabsorbed.

Lawns use nitrogen (**N**) for shoot development and green tissue, phosphorus (**P**) for root development (which may be needed when planting a new lawn), and potassium (**K**) for

LAWN FERTILIZERS



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overall strength and vitality. Excess **P** travels with surface water, flowing directly into streams and the lake and promotes algae blooms and excessive aquatic plant growth. Excess **N** is toxic to fish and invertebrates and can become a problem because it is soluble and easily travels into the ground water and can affect the quality of your drinking water. To help protect our lake, avoid or limit the use of these two nutrients on your property.

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Lawn Fertilizers

LAKE GEORGE FACT SHEET

Through photosynthesis a plant makes its own food and generally does not need fertilizer. The natural landscape of the forests around Lake George supports hundreds of plant, shrub and tree species that grow without fertilizers. These plants grow prolifically in the local environment and also do not require watering or maintenance. Landscaping that focuses on use of native plants, while minimizing lawn area, eliminates the need for lawn care fertilizers and pesticides. It also helps retain the beauty of the natural forest landscape that surrounds Lake George.

Bans of phosphorus in fertilizers have helped: Around the U.S., many state and localities have passed laws banning the use of fertilizers with high phosphorus concentrations. Results from such bans have shown immediate reductions on phosphorus levels. The FUND for Lake George and Lake George Waterkeeper support a proposal for such a ban in New York.

Low/zero phosphorus fertilizers are not the answer: Fertilizers are labeled with each nutrient as a percentage of the product and always displayed as nitrogen (**N**), phosphorus (**P**), and potassium (**K**). A product labeled 12-4-8 contains 12% **N**, 4% **P** and 8% **K**. If you have tested your soil and determined that your lawn may benefit from a fertilizer (and do not live near a lake, stream, wetland or drainage way), choose a product that the first number **N** is higher than the other two



Algae covers lake bottom rocks and plants. Algae blooms are most often identified offshore near property where fertilizer is used.

numbers **P** and **K**, such as 12-4-8 or 10-0-0. A lawn fertilizer without phosphorus **P** is a better choice, but all fertilizers used around the lake increase nutrient loading and promote algae blooms.

Lake friendly lawn care: In addition to choosing not to use a lawn fertilizer, you can also reduce the amount of nutrients that enter the lake from your property by undertaking the following actions:

- Plant a shoreline buffer to infiltrate and treat stormwater runoff before it leaves your property. A buffer will also deter waterfowl from feeding on your lawn.
- Use bioretention cells or rain gardens as a means to infiltrate and treat stormwater before it leaves your property.
- Limit the size of your lawn and plant native species on your property. Native plants do not require the use of fertilizers and pesticides or require extensive watering.
- Reduce the amount of disturbed areas on your property. Preserve or restore the natural environment.
- Grass clippings can be mulched and remain on your lawn to add nutrients in lieu of fertilizers. Do not dump grass clippings in the lake or streams; decomposing plants add additional nutrients into the lake.
- When watering container plants located on a dock, fertilizer should not be added as the excess will drain into the lake when the water passes through the soil.

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