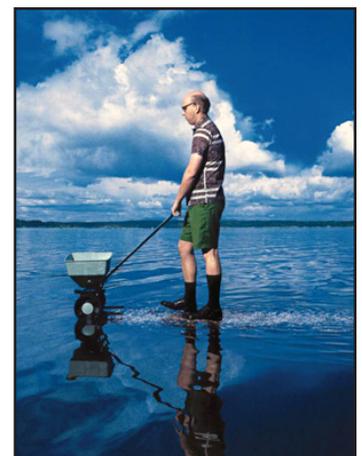


YOU'RE NOT JUST FERTILIZING YOUR LAWN

Lawn fertilizer isn't a problem if it's used carefully, but over-fertilizing can contribute to stormwater pollution in the Grand River watershed. If you use too much fertilizer or apply it at the wrong time, it can wash off your lawn or garden, enter the storm sewer system, and flow untreated into our rivers, lakes, and streams.

Just like in your garden, fertilizers make aquatic plants grow. But while fertilizer may help our lawns, excess phosphorus and nitrogen in waterways causes algae to grow faster than aquatic ecosystems can handle. Large algal blooms reduce oxygen levels, increase toxicity, and spur bacterial growth, making the water unsafe for human recreation and aquatic life. By properly applying and limiting usage of lawn fertilizer, you can help protect our surface water resources from nutrient pollution.

- **Don't Guess...Test!** First, find out if you even need fertilizer! Contact your Michigan State University Extension office to get a soil test. You'll save money and reduce the chance of over-applying.
- **Sweep It:** Sweep excess fertilizer and grass clippings from pavement back onto your lawn so that they don't wash into storm drains.
- **Go Slow and No:** Use slow-release nitrogen, no-phosphorus fertilizers that provide a slow, steady source of nutrients.
- **Hire Smart:** Select a lawn care service that follows the practices noted above.
- **Mow High:** Keep your lawn at three inches in height. Taller grass strengthens roots and shades out weeds. Also, remember that the nutrients from grass clippings left on your lawn act as a great fertilizer.
- **Don't Over Water:** Consider using a drip system or soaker hose instead of a sprinkler.
- **Go Natural:** Use commercially available compost or make your own using garden waste. Mixing compost with your soil means your plants will need less chemical fertilizer and puts your waste to good use. Also consider using organic fertilizers and pest control methods whenever possible.
- **Make Fertilizer-Free Zones:** Keep fertilizer at least 20 feet away from the edge of any lakes, streams, or storm drains.



In recent years, sources of pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced. Now more than 60 percent of water pollution comes from things like excess fertilizer applications, cars leaking oil, pet waste and failing septic tanks. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water too, and that adds up to a pollution solution!