

When you're fertilizing the lawn,
remember you're not just fertilizing the lawn.



You fertilize the lawn. Then it rains. The rain washes the fertilizer along the curb, into the stormdrain, and directly into creeks, rivers and ultimately into our Great Lakes, polluting our sources of water for drinking. Fertilizers cause algae to grow, which ultimately use up oxygen that fish need to survive. So if you fertilize, please follow directions, use sparingly and avoid overspray onto pavement or sidewalks.

Clean water makes Great Lakes!

www.cleanlakes.ca

Clean water is important to all of us

It's up to all of us to make it happen. In recent years, sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been reduced. Now, a major percentage of water pollution comes from things like cars leaking oil and other engine fluids, excessive use of fertilizers, waste chemicals like paints and solvents, 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!

Why do we need clean water?

Having clean water is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean water provides drinking water, fish habitat, recreation, commercial opportunities, and adds beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water. And all of us play a role in getting and keeping our creeks, rivers, lakes and groundwater clean.

What's the problem with fertilizer?

Fertilizer isn't a problem if it's used carefully. If you use too much fertilizer or apply it at the wrong time, it can easily wash off your lawn or garden into stormdrains and then flow untreated into streams and lakes. Just like in your garden, fertilizer in streams and lakes makes plants grow. In water bodies, extra fertilizer can mean increased algae and aquatic plant growth. Too much algae harm water quality and make boating, fishing and swimming unpleasant. Excessive algae also cause unpleasant smells along the shoreline and affect drinking water taste. As algae decay, they use up oxygen in the water that fish and other wildlife need.

Fertilizer use tips:

How can you fertilize and help keep our waters clean?

- Your best choice is to purchase or make your own free compost using garden waste, or use commercially available compost. Mixing compost with your soil means your plants will need less chemical fertilizer and puts your waste to good use. Commercial compost and soil amendments may also be available at local municipal waste management sites as well as your local garden store.
- Use fertilizers sparingly. Many plants do not need as much fertilizer or need it as often as you might think.
- Don't fertilize before a rainstorm and try to avoid spraying or spreading fertilizer onto pavement or sidewalks.
- Consider using organic fertilizers. They release nutrients more slowly.

To find out more about the impacts from fertilizing your lawn and what you can do to prevent water pollution, contact your local municipality or conservation authority.

Partners for clean water:



Images courtesy of the Puget Sound Action Team, Washington State Department of Ecology in partnership with King County and the cities of Bellevue, Seattle, and Tacoma, Washington

For information on the use of these posters contact
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