

## Let's get serious!

Fertilizer use in the watershed is serious business! You need to know about this new law!



There is a **new law** in Massachusetts restricting the use of fertilizers containing Phosphorus on all non-agricultural turf or lawns in order to protect our waterways.

("An Act Relative to the Regulation of Plant Nutrients" 330 CMR 31.00)



All **fertilizer** labels have **three bold numbers**. These **three numbers** represent the primary nutrients (nitrogen(N) - phosphorus(P) - potassium(K)).

### Here are some of the restrictions:

- ✚ Fertilizer containing Phosphorus can only be applied when a soil test has indicated that it is necessary OR when a new lawn is being established, patched or renovated?
- ✚ No fertilizer of any sort can be applied between December 1 and March 1 to frozen or snow covered soil, to saturated soil, or soils that frequently flood, or to soil within 20' of a water supply well or within 100' of surface water that is used for public drinking water supply.

- ✚ Any plant nutrient / fertilizer applied shall not exceed UMass guidelines for plant nutrient application rates to turf.
- ✚ Soil tests for nutrient analysis shall be obtained from the UMass Extension Soil Testing Lab or a laboratory using methods and procedures recommended by UMass. Soil tests are valid for three years.

### Why all the restrictions?



- ✚ Stormwater carries nutrients from fertilizer use, pet waste, faulty septic systems and other sources into our lakes and waterways. An abundance of Nitrogen and Phosphorus in the water acts like fertilizer and creates excessive growth of weeds and algae. The blue-green algae / cyanobacteria blooms that frequently occur in Lake Attitash are a significant health hazard and are caused by excessive amounts of nutrients in the water and the sediment.
- ✚ Algae are relatively short lived; when they decay, algae consume the available oxygen in the water. This can lead to a die-off of fish and animals, cause the water to become murky and odorous, and limit recreational activities.
- ✚ **TOO MANY NUTRIENTS IN THE WATER CAN RESULT IN ALGAL BLOOMS, WHICH CAN BE TOXIC TO HUMANS AND ANIMALS**

## What we can do to protect our lake from excess nutrients flowing into the lake from your land?

### Excellent examples of shoreline buffer strips



- ✚ Leave or create a buffer garden, a strip of natural or unfertilized vegetation along your shoreline. This prevents erosion and helps use up any excess nutrients before they enter the lake.
- ✚ Get your soil tested. Put your lawn on a diet. Feed it only when it is necessary according to the test results. UMass Extension offers low cost soil testing – visit the following website for more information:  
[https://ag.umass.edu/sites/ag.umass.edu/files/pdf-doc-ppt/routine\\_home\\_grounds\\_112917\\_0.pdf](https://ag.umass.edu/sites/ag.umass.edu/files/pdf-doc-ppt/routine_home_grounds_112917_0.pdf)
- ✚ Do not apply fertilizer before heavy rainfall
- ✚ Minimize fertilizer use on slopes
- ✚ Use a mulching mower. This reduces the need for fertilizer on your lawn by one-half.
- ✚ Use native plants as they thrive without fertilizer.
- ✚ Don't overwater your lawn. Consider using a timer or put out an empty tuna can – when it's full you can stop watering.
- ✚ Use organic mulch whenever possible.
- ✚ Compost or mulch yard waste. Don't leave it in the street or sweep it into storm drains or streams.
- ✚ Cover piles of dirt or mulch being used in landscaping projects.

**You can find No Phosphorus Fertilizer at Home Depot and Lowes and other garden supply stores!**



**Details about this law are available at [www.mass.gov/eea/docs/agr/pesticides/docs/plant-nutrient-regs-turf-and-lawn-factsheet.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/agr/pesticides/docs/plant-nutrient-regs-turf-and-lawn-factsheet.pdf)**

Information in this message taken from a Massachusetts DCR publication "Phosphorus in Fertilizer"

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