

Utica  
Spring 2020 Newsletter



**Fertilize Sparingly and Caringly**

Storm drains found in our streets and yards empty into our lakes and rivers. So, when we fertilize our lawn we could also be fertilizing our lakes and rivers. While fertilizer is good for our lawn, it's bad for our water. Fertilizer in our lakes and rivers causes algae to grow. Algae can form large blooms and use oxygen that fish need to survive. With 1.5 million homes in Southeast Michigan, all of us need to be aware of the cumulative affects of our lawn care practices.

*What can you do?*

- **Sweep it.**  
Sweep or blow fertilizer and grass clippings back onto the lawn and not into the street to prevent them from getting into storm drains and ditches, which can cause algae problems. Don't dump lawn clippings into drains or ditches.
- **Hire smart.**  
Select a lawn service that uses organic fertilizers or offers a slow-release nitrogen, low or no phosphorus option. Request a soil test to ensure the right amount is applied. Check out Michigan Green Industry Association's, <http://www.landscape.org/content.asp?contentid=155>, endorsed companies for the Healthy Lawn Care Program for Watershed Protection.
- **Don't guess, soil test.**  
A soil test will tell you what, if any, fertilizer is needed in your yard. Contact your Michigan State University Extension county office for more information.
- **Go slow.**  
Select an organic or slow-release fertilizer. Check the label. A slow-release fertilizer is one with at least half of the nitrogen in "water soluble" form. Slow-release fertilizers provide a steady supply of plant nutrients over an extended period of time.
- **Mow high.**  
Make your lawn cheaper and easier to maintain by mowing high – 3 inches is the rule! Tall grass promotes root growth and shades out weeds. Let grass clippings fall back on the lawn. Clippings recycle nutrients back into the soil, so fertilizer needs can be reduced by 25% or more!
- **Make fertilizer-free zones.**  
Keep fertilizer applications at least 20 feet away from the edge of lakes, streams, or storm drains.

For more information regarding fertilizer, please visit <http://semcog.org/>