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www.AWwatersheds.org

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Acton Wakefield Watersheds Alliance

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www.AWwatersheds.org

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For more information on lawn care visit
www.yardscaping.org

References:

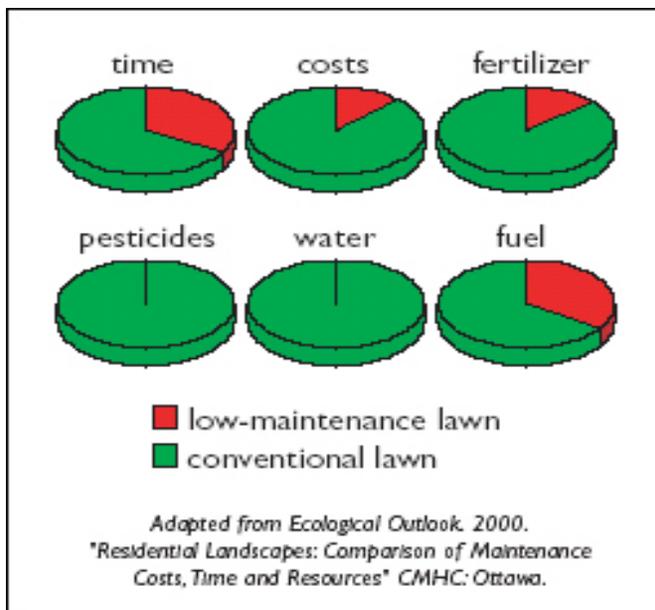
- ◆ Maine Department of Environmental Protection
- ◆ New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
- ◆ UNH Cooperative Extension
- ◆ Maine.gov
- ◆ UNH Cooperative Extension Turf Specialist
- ◆ Green Grass and Clear Water: water-friendly lawn care recommendations - Julia Peterson, UNH Cooperative Extension
- ◆ New England Regional Nitrogen and Phosphorus Fertilizer and Associated Management Practice Recommendations - University of Connecticut, 2008
- ◆ Michigan State University Extension

Ask your local hardware store, garden center, or nursery if they carry or if they will bring in **NO** phosphorus fertilizers for you to use. Most businesses will be happy to accommodate your request.

Remember:

- Perform a soil test
- Try to avoid the use of fertilizers all together
- If needed, use low or no phosphorus fertilizers
- Absolutely avoid: 12-12-12, 5-10-5, or 10-6-4 fertilizers AND water soluble nitrogen fertilizers such as urea (46-0-0) and ammonium nitrate (33-0-0).

Low Maintenance Lawns Save You Time & Money!!!!



A comparison of maintenance inputs for low-maintenance lawns and conventional lawns provided by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Acton Wakefield Watersheds Alliance



Low Impact Lakefront Lawns

A lakefront property and homeowners practical guide to understanding low impact lawn care techniques.

Fertilizers 101 - Understanding Fertilizers

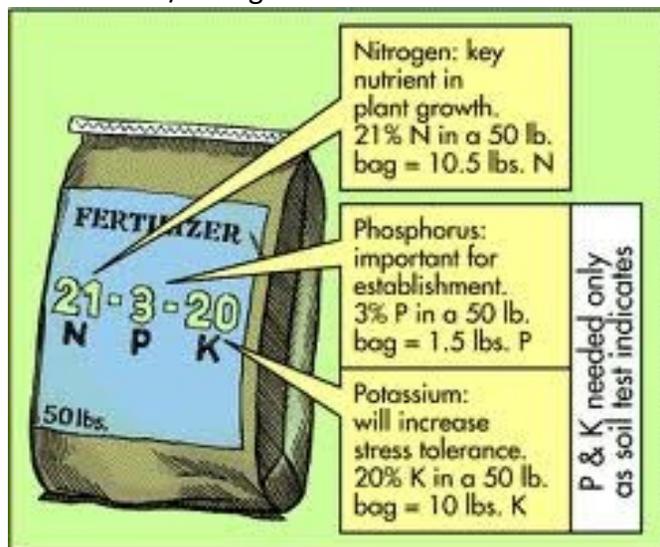
What does a fertilizer do?

Fertilizing your lawn helps provide essential nutrients to the turf grasses influencing the grass color, the ability to recover from stresses (e.g. traffic), and helping to prevent weed invasions and disease.

What is in fertilizers?

There are a variety of fertilizers out there, but the majority focus on three essential nutrients: nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K). These essential nutrients are represented as a percent at the top of fertilizer bags (see image below).

- ◆ **Nitrogen** is the key element that promotes growth in grasses.
- ◆ **Phosphorus** helps to build the root system and establish the grass as well as helping nitrogen work.
- ◆ **Potassium** works towards grass stress tolerance and longevity. Potassium helps the grass winter by dehydrating the plant which thickens/strengthens cell walls



Courtesy Cornell University

Not all fertilizers are created equal...

The use of fertilizers is **site specific!** Fertilizers should not be used until a **Standard Soil Test** is performed. Soil tests allow lawn owners to monitor pH, phosphorus (P), potassium (K) and other influential nutrients as well as providing reliable recommendations for lime.



Instead of lawn right to the water, add a vegetative buffer.
Sketch Courtesy: The Fund for Lake George

Why should we care about fertilization near water bodies...

1. Lawns are wonderful recreation areas! Over-fertilization of recreational lawns can lead to family and pet health concerns.
2. Over-fertilization or improper use of lawn fertilizers can directly impact water quality. As the water quality declines so do property values.

Lawn Care Tips

To fertilize or not to fertilize...

1. **Perform a Standard Soil Test!** This is the best way to first assess your needs, if any, for turf grass management. Many soils may only need a slight pH or organic matter adjustment without additional fertilizers.
2. If unfertilized lawn is considered acceptable, then do not fertilize.
3. If fertilization is chosen: Do not apply before

spring green up. May is the #1 time for turfs. Roots like it cool and will be ready to grow and take up nutrients that are added. Root growth is non-existent at temperatures above 85°F. Also, choose solid over liquid fertilizer as it is less likely to run off in a rain event.

4. Never apply fertilizer at higher rates than are recommended on the labels of fertilizer bag. Most lawns will require 1/2 to 1/3 less fertilizer than is recommended.
5. If soil tests indicate that P and/or K are at acceptable concentrations, try to avoid blended fertilizers with N-P-K. Only N fertilizers may be needed.
6. Use slow release, water-insoluble N fertilizers (marked as WIN). Fertilizers containing greater than 50% as WIN are preferred.
7. Avoid combination products, such as pesticide and fertilizer.
8. If fertilizing, set a target maximum loading rate of 2 lbs N/1000 ft²/year on established

Other helpful lawn care tips...

1. Avoid cutting lawns too short. Short lawns increase erosion and runoff. Lawns should be maintained at 3 inches or higher and cut no more than 1/3 of the blade to encourage longer, stronger turf grass roots.
2. Return clippings to turf after mowing. Clippings will return slow release N and P as well as up to 20% of the nutrients to the soil.
3. Incorporate white or "Dutch" clover into lawn. Legumes will provide N naturally.
4. Avoid overwatering. One inch per week is generally plenty, more increases leaching.
5. In NH, you cannot add fertilizers within 25 feet of the reference line.
6. Leave a vegetative buffer or zone of natural vegetation between the lawn and the water. Prevents erosion and captures nutrients.