

Cutting the Link from Green Lawns to Green Water.

Phosphorus has been identified as a significant pollutant in many waterways in the state and phosphorus from fertilizers has been identified as a pollution source. Since most soils have plenty of phosphorus for grass and other plant growth, requiring the use of phosphorus-free fertilizers is one way to control phosphorus pollution that makes environmental and economic sense.

What is Phosphorus?

Phosphorus is an essential nutrient for plant growth and is contained in many fertilizers. Phosphorus is an element found naturally in the air, soil, rocks and organic materials. There are many natural sources of phosphorus such as decomposing plant matter, phosphate rock, and fecal matter. But human activity is the most abundant source, either from household wastewater or fertilizers.

Why Isn't More Better?

Statewide soil test results indicate that most soils have plenty of phosphorus for plant growth. When phosphorus fertilizer is applied unnecessarily, storm water washes away the excess phosphorus from lawns and gardens to local waterways.

Phosphorus can be thought of as junk food for aquatic plants. Just one pound of phosphorus can produce 10,000 pounds of algae and aquatic plants. Too much phosphorus can cause algae blooms; reducing water quality and clarity. Also, when the algae bloom is over, and the bacteria start decomposing the algae, it can lead to foul odors and fish kills due to lack of oxygen. These conditions can eventually prevent recreational use for fishing and swimming. As a result, many New Jersey waterways are considered impaired because the levels of phosphorus in the water exceed the surface water quality standard.

Fertilizer Bag Numbers

The numbers on a bag of fertilizer refer to the percentages of plant nutrients: nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K) in the fertilizer. In a 100-pound bag of 5-10-10 mixture, for instance, there would be 5% (5 pounds) of nitrogen, 10% (10 pounds) of phosphorus and 10% (10 pounds) of potassium. A phosphorus free fertilizer would have a middle number of zero, such as 10-0-5.



Report black bear damage or nuisance or aggressive behavior to local police or to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife at 1(877) WARN DEP.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION CORNER

"Another Way to Recycle - Just about Anything".

Your trash may be somebody else's treasure. Go to www.freecycle.org to place an ad for something you want to give away or something you need. It is FREE and was set up with the goal of reducing the amount of trash going to our landfills.

There are FREECYCLE chapters in Newton, Stanhope, Morris County, and Warren County, each with its own rules (*read these first*). A great way to dispose of unwanted furniture, computer equipment, TVs, and many other things, which still are usable and should not be put in the garbage."

For more information please visit the web sites listed below.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stanhopenjfreecycle/>
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NewtonNJ/>
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/freecycleMorrisNJ/>

