

# Remember, you're not just fertilizing your lawn

Our Water. Our Future.



Ours to Protect



## Fertilize sparingly and carefully

Storm drains found in our streets and yards empty into our lakes and streams. So, when we fertilize our lawn we could also be fertilizing our lakes and streams. While fertilizer is good for our lawn, it's bad for our water. Fertilizer in our lakes and streams 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 effects of our lawn care practices.

What can you do? Follow the simple tips on the back of this card for a healthier lawn that's cheaper and easier to maintain.

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**Sweep it.** Fertilizer and grass clippings left on sidewalks and driveways wash into storm drains. So, save money – and our lakes and streams – by sweeping fertilizer and grass clippings back onto the lawn.

**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.



**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.

**Buy low.** Choose a fertilizer with low or no phosphorus. Most lawns already contain enough phosphorus. Excess phosphorus causes algae blooms in our lakes!

**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 insoluble" 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.

Find out more at [www.semcog.org](http://www.semcog.org)

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