

## Fertilizer and Stormwater



**Cornell University**  
Cooperative Extension  
Saratoga County

Saratoga County Intermunicipal  
Stormwater Management  
(ISWM) Program

[www.saratogastormwater.org](http://www.saratogastormwater.org)

Saratoga CCE	Ballston	Ballston Spa	Charlton
Clifton Park	Greenfield	Halfmoon	Malta
Mechanicville	Milton	Moreau	Round Lake
Saratoga Springs	Saratoga County	South Glens Falls	Stillwater (T)
Stillwater (V)	Waterford (T)	Waterford (V)	Wilton

## Clean water is important to all of us.

It's up to all of us to make it happen. In recent years sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced. Now, more than 60 percent of water pollution comes from things like cars leaking oil, fertilizers from farms and gardens, and failing septic tanks. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water too and that adds up to a pollution solution!

## Why do we need clean water?

Having clean water is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean water provides recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, drinking water and adds beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water and all of us have a role in getting and keeping our lakes, rivers, marine and ground waters clean.

## What's the problem with fertilizer?

Fertilizer isn't a problem if it's used carefully. If you use too much fertilizer or apply it at the wrong time, it can easily wash off your lawn or garden into storm drains and then flow untreated into lakes or streams. Just like in your garden, fertilizer in lakes and streams makes plants grow. In water bodies, extra fertilizer can mean extra algae and aquatic plant growth. Too much algae harms water quality and makes boating, fishing and swimming unpleasant. As algae decay, they use up oxygen in the water that fish and other wildlife need.

## Clean Water tips:

How can you fertilize and help keep our waters clean?

- Use fertilizers sparingly. Many plants do not need as much fertilizer or need it as often as you might think.
- Don't fertilize before a rain storm.
- Consider using organic fertilizers; they release nutrients more slowly.
- Use commercially available compost or make your own using garden waste. Mixing compost with your soil means your plants will need less chemical fertilizer and puts your waste to good use. Commercial compost and soil amendments may be available from the Town as well as your local garden store.
- For more information on fertilizing alternatives and composting, call the Saratoga County Cornell Cooperative Extension's Master Gardeners program or the Stormwater Management Coordinator at:

**885-8995** or email at [brn5@cornell.edu](mailto:brn5@cornell.edu)



WHEN YOU'RE FERTILIZING THE LAWN,  
REMEMBER YOU'RE NOT JUST  
FERTILIZING THE LAWN.



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**You fertilize the lawn. Then it rains. The rain washes the fertilizer along the curb, into the storm drain, and directly into our creeks and streams, Lakes and Rivers. This causes algae and aquatic plants to grow, which uses up oxygen that fish need to survive. So if you fertilize, please follow the manufacturer's directions and use sparingly.**