



## Things you can do to reduce lawn care pollution

- ◆ Test your soil.
- ◆ Select fertilizers that have low or no phosphorus.
- ◆ Read and follow the instructions on the label.
- ◆ Ask your lawn care company to fertilize with care.
- ◆ Avoid spreading fertilizer on paved areas.
- ◆ Fertilize in the fall if at all!
- ◆ Don't fertilize right before large rain events

### How do you test your soil?

Soil test kits can be picked up at your local Alexandria library or the Local Cooperative Extension office in Alexandria. Instructions on how to properly test your soil are included in the kit.

### Contact Information:

Alexandria Local Cooperative Extension  
Lee Center

1108 Jefferson Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Office Phone: 703-519-3325

<http://offices.ext.vt.edu/view.cfm?webname=Alexandria>

### For information on soil testing visit:

<http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/compost/452-129/452-129.html#toc>



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Fertilize in the Fall to watch your plants grow Tall

*Wise Lawn Care Prevents Water Pollution*



Over fertilizing pollutes water resources. Excess nutrients end up in our streams and create algal blooms that harm aquatic life by depleting oxygen levels.

Learn ways you can help prevent water pollution in this brochure

# Environmentally Friendly Lawn Care

## How Does Lawn Care Affect Water Quality?

Proper lawn care is an essential part of protecting our local water quality and the health of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. Fertilizers contain nutrients that, when over-applied, contribute to algae blooms and fish kills in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Plants can only utilize a certain percentage of applied fertilizer, and the excess fertilizer washes away with the rain into neighborhood streams. Fertilizers contain nitrogen and phosphorus that end up feeding our streams in addition to our lawns and gardens. When streams have increased nutrient loadings, plants and algae grow above normal population levels, absorbing greater amounts of oxygen, and thus decreasing available oxygen for fish and other aquatic life.

To avoid the financial and environmental costs associated with water pollution related to over fertilization, there are several steps that Alexandria property owners can undertake.

## What can you do to help?

The best way to prevent pollution is to become educated about fertilizer use and proper lawn care.

Here are some helpful ways to properly maintain your lawn in an environmentally friendly way.

- Test your soil
- Do not fertilize if it isn't necessary
- Select a fertilizer that has little or no phosphorous and approximately 60% of nitrogen in slow-release, water insoluble form
- Fertilize during the dry season
- Avoid spreading fertilizer onto paved areas
- Read instructions on how to properly apply the product; avoid over fertilizing
- Light watering of fertilizer will facilitate plant root absorption
- Ask your lawn care company to fertilize with care and use environmentally friendly products

## Why should you test your soil?

Soil testing is great way to help clean up our local streams and have a great lawn. Soil tests are performed to evaluate the soil's nutrient potential and determine the most beneficial application rates of fertilizer and lime for optimum plant growth.

Virginia Tech has a soil-testing laboratory that performs tests for the public. The test results provide information on what kind and the amount of nutrients you should apply to your lawn.

Soil tests and recommendations provide valuable information for making sound economical and environmental land use decisions. Over fertilizing is costly and can damage the environment.

