

The Pembroke Stormwater Times

Summer 2021



SIMPLE LAWN CARE RECOMMENDATIONS

Thinking about working on the lawn or digging in the garden? Keep in mind that some lawn care practices can create water quality problems. Plants need nutrients to grow, but excess nutrients (including nitrogen and phosphorous found in fertilizers) can run off our properties and into local waterbodies. Here are some easy practices for creating and maintaining a truly healthy lawn that is both attractive and safer for the environment.

1. Choose the Right Grass Seed

Consider limiting lawn area to locations where grass will grow easily and will be used for outdoor activities. Choose grass varieties that require less maintenance. For northern New England, choose seed mixes with higher percentages of turf-type tall fescues, compact-type tall fescues and/or fine fescues. Choose mixes with smaller percentages of Kentucky bluegrass and/or perennial ryegrass. Over-seed bare spots.

In shaded areas, select shade-tolerant turf grasses like fine-leaf and tall fescues. Up to 10% of total seed mix can be white clover to help fix nitrogen in soil naturally. Avoid clover if anyone in the household is allergic to bee stings.

2. Don't Overwater

One inch of water per week (from rain or irrigation) is usually enough. Overwatering can cause excess nutrients to move out of the root zone and into waterbodies or groundwater.

3. Test Your Soil

To have your soil tested, you can visit: <https://extension.unh.edu/programs/soil-testing-services>. Sometimes adjusting the soil pH or organic matter are the only treatments needed to improve a lawn. If your soil test results are acceptable but your lawn is not, check for other problems like pests, grass variety, or sun/shade.

4. Mow Smart

Mow grass no shorter than three inches high. Cut no more than one-third of the blade each time you mow to encourage longer, stronger roots. Leave the clippings after mowing so they can return nutrients to the soil. NEVER dispose of clippings in drainage areas, storm drains, or waterbodies.

MUNICIPAL UPDATE

In June 2021, the Board of Selectmen adopted the Pembroke Illicit Discharge Ordinance, which prohibits the discharge of harmful or hazardous waste into the Town's stormwater system. The purpose of the ordinance to protect water quality in the town.

The adoption of the Illicit Discharge Ordinance concludes all the regulatory requirements of the town under the EPA MS4 Permit. Next steps are to implement cleaning and testing of the stormwater system infrastructure.

We will continue to provide information to the public on these ongoing efforts. For more information, check out our website:

www.ThinkBlueSuncook.org

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAWS THAT NEED FERTILIZER

1. Determine How Much to Apply

Measure the dimensions of the area where you plan to apply. The square footage of the area will determine how much fertilizer to purchase and use.

Only use what you need. Seal and store opened fertilizer bags in an airtight container or share excess with others.

Lawns older than 10 years usually need less nitrogen than newer lawns, especially if the clippings are left, so apply only half of the amount directed on the bag. Only apply more if there's no improvement over time in turf color and density. Staying under four applications per season at this reduced rate helps keep the overall application at the recommended level² for water-quality friendly practices. Lawns less than 10 years old may need the full amount of nitrogen as indicated on the fertilizer instructions. Apply less than four times per year.

2. Know When & Where to Apply

Avoid applying fertilizer mid-summer when turf growth naturally subsides or before a big rain when it can run off into nearby waterways or leach into ground water. In northern New England, apply no earlier than spring green-up and no later than mid-September to ensure the proper soil temperature for grass to take up the nutrients.

Know your local and state laws related to fertilizer applications. For example, do not apply any fertilizers within 25 feet of water bodies in New Hampshire.

3. Choose the Right Fertilizer

Avoid combination products that include both pesticide and fertilizer unless confident you need both. Unnecessary applications or fertilizers and pesticides can lead to soil and water contamination.

Select lawn fertilizer with low or no phosphorous unless your soil test indicates otherwise. The fertilizer formula (e.g., 20-0-15) tells the relative percentages of nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P) and potassium (K), in that order.

Slow release formulations (>50% water insoluble nitrogen, "WIN") are generally preferable. Only use quick release products when there is a need to grow turf very quickly, for example, to prevent erosion of bare soil during a new seeding. Check the product label to see what type of nitrogen it contains.

Organic fertilizers are typically slow release and contain micronutrients that are beneficial to soil. They are not petroleum-based like most synthetic fertilizers. Over-applying any type of fertilizer or over-irrigating fertilized turf can lead to water quality problems.

This content was originally written and published by UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Sea Grant and was put into this template with permission.

²*New England Regional Nitrogen and Phosphorus Fertilizer and Associated Management Practice Recommendations for Lawns Based on Water Quality Considerations. 2008. Karl Guillard (ed.) Turfgrass Nutrient Management Bulletin B-0100. College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Connecticut. USDA CSREES project # 2006-51130-03656.*

More Resources:

- UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center: www.extension.unh.edu/tags/home-lawn-care
- ThinkBlueSuncook: www.thinkbluesuncook.org
- NH-MS4 Regional Stormwater Coalitions: www4.des.state.nh.us/nh-ms4/

This flyer is intended for educational purposes as part of Pembroke's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) requirements. Check out more at www.thinkbluesuncook.org.



Town of Pembroke

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