

Lawn Care Tips: “Green the grass, not the water”

With spring finally here, caring for your lawn will soon be on your weekend to-do list. Want to do the job so that it costs you less and protects the environment? Before using lawn chemicals, do your homework about helping your lawn the natural way. When chemicals are needed, make sure you are using the right product and understand how much to apply and when to apply it.

Overuse of fertilizer and other lawn care products is a common mistake for homeowners. Fertilizer provides plant nutrients that can help turn your lawn green, but is a pollutant when it is washed off lawns and gardens into streams, rivers and other bodies of water. Excess nutrients in water bodies can lead to massive algae blooms and oxygen depletion that kills fish and other aquatic creatures, particularly during the warm summer months.

Here are the basic steps to take:

1. **Test your soil.** Visit the UMass Amherst Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Laboratory website: <http://extension.umass.edu/turf/> for information about soil testing, or contact the Laboratory at (413) 545-2311.
2. **Lime your lawn.** If your lawn pH is low, the nutrients cannot be absorbed efficiently.
3. **Enrich your soil.** Top dress with a thin layer of loam or compost.
4. **Use the right grass seed.** Use blended seeds that are right for your sun conditions.
5. **Only use what your grass and plants need.** Consider applying slow-release organic forms of nitrogen. Be sure to follow the instructions.
6. **Fertilize when grass is actively growing.** Grass grows best in spring and fall when the weather is cool.
7. **Check the weather.** Avoid applying fertilizer just before a rain storm.
8. **Fertilize the grass, not the fishes.** Sweep excess fertilizer off hard surfaces onto the lawn or into the garden.
9. **Smarter mowing saves money.** Keep the mover set high, 3”, and leave clippings on the lawn for free compost!
10. **Mow for your muscles.** Purchase a hand-mower to save fossil fuel and get an aerobic work-out at the same time. Some newer models feature self-sharpening blades.

There are many great resources available to get the green lawn you desire without negative impacts to the environment:

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection: [**Don't Trash The Grass.**](#)

Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program: [**Environmentally Sound Lawn Care.**](#)

Thank you for helping to protect Carver's water.

