

Fertilizer use impacts our water sources

Fertilizer provides our lawns and gardens with nutrients for plant growth, but when it is used in excess or applied incorrectly it can harm the quality of our drinking water sources.

Nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) are the two key components of fertilizer that can lead to pollution of local water sources.

Manage fertilizer use

Excess levels of nitrates in drinking water can have damaging effects on human health. In particular, consumption of nitrates can cause a condition in infants called blue baby

syndrome, which can be fatal if left untreated.

Phosphorus is a major source of pollution in many lakes and waterways due to its ability to encourage excessive algae and pond weed growth. Excess nitrogen and phosphorus, carried by runoff and erosion into local waterbodies, leads to algal blooms that impact the quality of water and adversely affect the habitat of fish and other aquatic organisms.

You can help

It is possible to have a healthy lawn and garden without contributing to water pollution. Follow these simple

recommendations for a healthy lawn and a healthy water supply!

Apply fertilizer responsibly:

- Apply fertilizer at the appropriate time of year: fertilizer should be applied in spring to coincide with periods of maximum plant growth
- Avoid applying fertilizer before heavy rains or when the ground is frozen
- Apply a smaller amount of fertilizer, more frequently to prevent buildup of excess nutrients
- Aerate compacted soils before applying fertilizer
- Use quick release fertilizers on clay soils and slow release fertilizers on sandy soils

Eliminate excess fertilizer use:

- Conduct a soil test to determine the nutrient levels and nutrient deficiencies in soil (find a test kit at your local home and garden centre)
- Choose a fertilizer to match your soil's requirements for nitrogen and phosphorus
- Always apply fertilizer according to recommended application rates
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn after mowing: grass clippings decompose and recycle nutrients back to the lawn, reducing the need for repeat fertilizer applications



FACT SHEET 9

FERTILIZER



- Plant native plants and grasses – plants adapted to local conditions require less fertilizer

Handle and store fertilizer safely:

- Always follow the label for storage, handling, and disposal instructions
- Store fertilizer in a covered facility where it can't be exposed to precipitation

- Fill fertilizer spreaders on a hard surface and sweep up spills immediately

In Wellington County

On farms and for others who use or store large amounts of commercial fertilizer, like golf courses and retail stores, the application and storage of fertilizer is managed through prohibition very close to the well, or with a negotiated

risk management plan. However, for residential and commercial properties, these activities are managed using education and outreach. For more information on how to use fertilizer safely, please contact the local municipal office or go online to www.wellingtonwater.ca.

Text reproduced with permission of The Town of Orangeville

For more information, contact:

Wellington Source Water Protection,
7444 Wellington Road 21, Elora, ON
Tel: 1-844-383-9800

Email: sourcewater@centrewellington.ca

Website: www.wellingtonwater.ca

Or your local municipal office.



WELLINGTON
Source Water
PROTECTION
wellingtonwater.ca
a partnership of Wellington County municipalities

