

# FERTILIZER GUIDELINES

## Green Lawns and Healthy Lakes

We maintain the value of our properties by having an attractively landscaped lot and by being in a community with clean streets and lakes. We may be our own worst enemies! Some like a lush lawn, a clean car and want to swim and fish in and boat on our lakes. Unfortunately most of our fertilizers and driveway car washes contain phosphorus which (together with water soluble nitrogen) creates ideal conditions for algae and common water plants such as bladderwort and pondweed. These spoil the lake and then decay to rob the fish of oxygen!

The environmental committee wants to help us have an attractive lot and clean lakes. It is easier if owners follow the general guidelines given below but this is not always possible. So to support a healthy lawn we looked for compatible fertilizers and developed some guidelines overleaf which we believe provide a reasonable compromise solution to the problem and meet the spirit of the Restrictive Covenants of the Association. Give them a try and help us find out how they work!

### General Guidelines for Residents

Lakefront owners should maintain a buffer zone of unmanaged (unfertilized ) grasses or natural vegetation around the shoreline.

All home owners should try to clear their street gutters of plant residues once a week. The township only does it 4 times a year.

In general control soil erosion by using natural ground covers like such as ivy and myrtle rather than lawn grasses. Be advised that wood chip does not reduce soil erosion but makes the beds look good and more beds mean a reduction in the overall size of the lawn. Remember 24 % of your area is the maximum lawn size permitted by the covenants.

Use a drought resistant low fertilizer grass such the Rebel II fescue (available in sod) which the association uses on the dams. Set the mower up to 3-4 inches to choke out weeds and leave clippings on the lawn as fertilizer.

### Fertilizer Choices

We sought a slow release granular lawn fertilizer - that is one with a high percentage of water insoluble nitrogen (WIN of 40-80%) and near zero phosphorus. The commercial ones (e.g. Scotts) were fast acting "greeners" so had too low a WIN content. The organic ones such as Turf Tone had high phosphorus. At our request S. J. Farmers Exchange blended Professional Turf Food and for 3 years it was available at Green Lea on Rte 73. It gave mixed results so we are not asking for it to be made this year.

**Sturbridge Lakes**  
Association

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Instead Green Lea has marked their bags of Ringer Lawn Restore which is now our top choice in organics. We also like the slow release Espoma Organic Plant food but not Turf Tone which is 10 - 6 - 4 and only 30% WIN.

Data on the "good guys" is in the table below:-

Comment	Company	Product Name	Ni -Pho-Pot	WIN	WIN %
No phosphorus Needs Bulk order	S.J. Farmer's Exchange	Professional Turf Food	10 - 0 - 10	5.5	55
<b>RECOMMENDED</b> (slow release)	Ringer	Lawn Restore	10 - 2 - 6	9	90
	Espoma	Organic Plant Food	18 - 8 - 6	11	61

## Application Volume and Timing

Avoid application of fertilizer before a heavy rain. Use the minimum, say 2-3lbs of nitrogen per year per 1000 sq. ft. The fall is the critical time for the lawn and a once a year feed then is best for minimum lake impact. Splitting the feed evenly during the season isn't a bad alternative! You will need twice the total weight of Ringer Lawn Restore (9% nitrogen) than Espoma Organic Plant food (18% nitrogen) And of course lime makes it more effective.

## Lawn Service Contractors

We do not believe the quality control on liquids is as good as that of solid feeds and contractors can use slow release granular product with low phosphorus.

Please ask for it and have them test your soil first to know how much you need