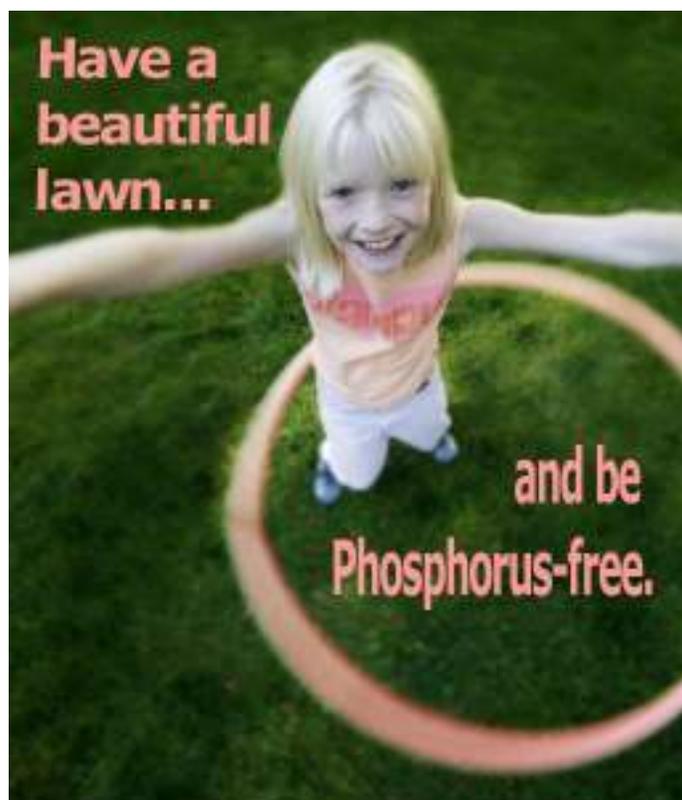


Go Phosphorus Free!



Maine waters are suffering as a result of too much phosphorus being washed in by melting snow and rain. One source of phosphorus is lawn fertilizer. So a new law effective January 1, 2008 discourages the use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus.

Do I need phosphorus?

Probably not! Over 90% of lawns tested in the past 5 years would not have become greener with additional phosphorus. That means your lawn - and your lawncare budget - shouldn't require phosphorus to stay healthy.

Is there a time when it is ok to use phosphorus fertilizers? Yes, when:

1. Soil test results from a laboratory indicate that additional phosphorus is needed; or
2. The fertilizer will be used to establish a new lawn, although **new research shows most soils only need nitrogen.**

Why care about phosphorus?

Phosphorus is food for algae (microscopic plants). Too much algae turns lakes green with a smelly scum and kills the cold water fish (trout, salmon, etc.). Once there is too much phosphorus in a lake it is difficult and very expensive to remove it.

How much fertilizer should I apply?

If you must fertilize - avoid over fertilizing!

Measure your lawn area to determine the square footage. Then calibrate your spreader to apply one-half the recommended amount of fertilizer based on the bag's label. Watch for lawn response. Reapply at the reduced rate when your lawn's response is not acceptable. **More is not better.** Don't apply before spring green-up. The best time is September.

To have a good looking lawn, do I even need to fertilize my lawn?

No, if you leave your grass clippings (the natural fertilizer) and your lawn is 10 or more years old there are enough nutrients in the soil to grow a healthy lawn. (And clippings don't lead to thatch.) Younger lawns may need nitrogen; look for bags with 10-0-0 on the label.

How do I find phosphorus-free fertilizers in the store?

The amount of phosphorus can be located by looking for the 3 numbers on the package. The numbers indicate the percent of nitrogen, phosphorus and potash. Look for packages where the middle number is zero for phosphorus-free.

How can I get a soils test done?

Get your soil test kit at stores that sell fertilizer, University of Maine Cooperative Extension Offices, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, by calling 581-3591, or on the web at <http://anlab.umesci.maine.edu> and scroll to bottom.



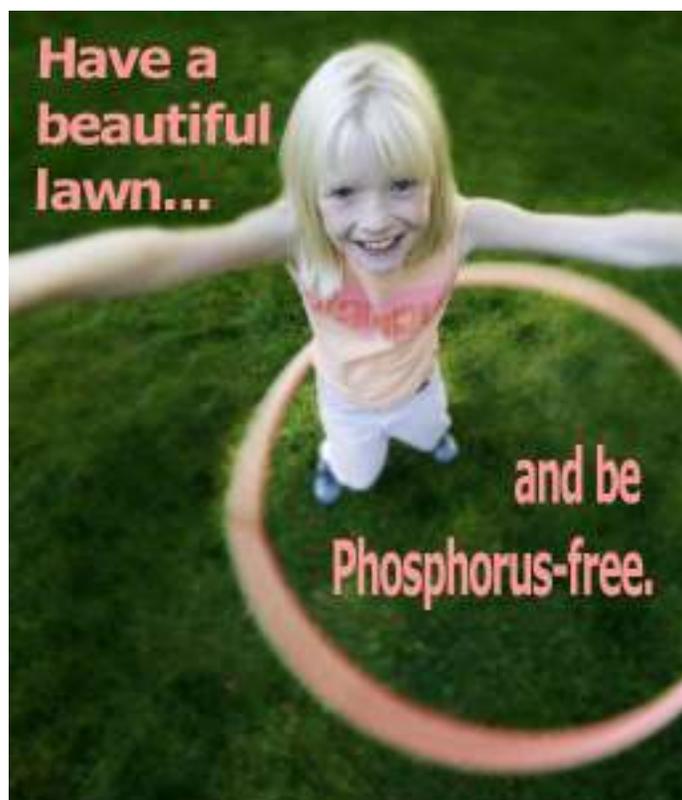
For more information, call
DEP 207-287-3901 or
www.MaineDEP.com

(Publication #: DEPLW0887)



ThinkBlueMaine.org

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