



Community Partners for Clean Streams Monthly eMonitor



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Up Front

If you won't be using that stack of neon paint in storage from a decade ago, but don't know what to do with it, we will have just the information for you. Before you dispose of that paint improperly, consult *Protect the Premises: A Guide to Proper Paint Disposal for Contractors and Residents*. This handy brochure presents several ways to dispose of your paint while making sure it does not contaminate local waterways. Additionally, it provides a list of organizations willing to accept paint donations and information on Washtenaw County's toxics disposal center. The guide will be available to all partners in mid-September. If you can't wait, give us a call at (734)222-6833 or (734)222-6813 and we can provide you with some information now.



First things First: Fall Fertilizing

Fall seems like an unlikely time to fertilize lawns. The leaves are falling off trees and plants are preparing to go dormant for the cold Michigan winter. But early October is the best time to fertilize. In the fall, plants send a signal to their leaves to slow the growing process and start to put any energy into storage in the roots. So, fertilizing in the fall boosts root growth; strong roots are essential to winter survival. Plus, with energy in storage, grass will bounce back quickly in the spring.



While fertilizer may seem like a magic cure, there are some problems associated with its widespread use. Fertilizer can be washed into watersheds when it is not absorbed by plants. This extra dose of phosphorus creates a burst of aquatic plant life. When these plants die, they are decomposed by aquatic bacteria that require oxygen to break down the plant. The water becomes depleted of oxygen and many fish species die off in these extreme conditions. In Michigan, we are lucky to have very fertile soil that requires less chemical input. Therefore,

by applying unnecessary nutrients you are fertilizing our waterways. Knowing a few simple facts can prevent this problem and save money.

Every synthetic fertilizer is mainly made up of three nutrients, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. On the package's label, these are represented by three numbers giving their percentage. For example, if you see 7-5-10, the fertilizer would be 7% nitrogen, 5% phosphorus, and 10% potassium. Nitrogen encourages top growth, phosphorus encourages root growth, and potassium assists in structural development and drought/disease resistance.



Deciding which fertilizer to use is easier than you think. To determine the formula that will leave your turf a lush ocean of green in the spring, call up Community Partners for Clean Streams and request a complimentary soil test kit. Follow the instructions on the test kit and mail in your soil sample. The MSU extension office will test the nutrients already present in the soil and mail you the results. Based on these results, you can determine what proportion of nutrients your fertilizer should contain. Share these results with your turf care professional or bring them to the store when you purchase your fertilizer.



Select a slow-release fertilizer to prevent water pollution; this allows nutrients to be doled out to plants as they are needed. Organic fertilizers are among the most effective slow-release fertilizers.

If you are apply your own fertilizer yourself, make sure to buy only what you need. This eliminates the risk of spills and the nuisance of storage. If you overestimate your need, be sure to store fertilizer in a marked, sealed container. The storage area should be paved and covered to prevent precipitation from carrying fertilizer into

our waterways.

CPCS News

New CPCS participants:

- o Liebherr Aerospace

CPCS renewals:

- o Kaiser Optical Systems
- o Thetford-Baker Rd.
- o Thetford- Jackson Rd.

Tip of the Month

Researchers have found that acetic acid, known to the rest of us as vinegar, is just as effective as most common herbicides at getting rid of those weeds. A 20% solution of vinegar is all you need. Vinegar degrades in water and does not accumulate in the environment, so it poses little threat to wildlife. Most hardware stores sell solutions of this concentration.



For more herbicide alternatives, Community Partners for Clean Streams offers an *Herbicides* informational packet with preventative practices, herbicide alternatives, and herbicide application tips. Call (734)222-6833 or (734)222-6813 to request your copy.

Websites of the Month

This issue was dedicated to fertilizer usage. The amount and type of fertilizer you use depends on what type of soil you have. There are three main components of soil: sand, clay, and silt. There are many amateur tests to determine what type of soil you have. Visit these sites if you want to identify your soil type and to determine how it affects your fertilizer program.



Ohio Division of Water Resources: www.conservewater.utah.gov/OutdoorUse/Lawn/#soils

St. Clair County, IL schools: web.stclair.k12.il.us/splashd/soiltype.htm

Fertilizer.com: www.fertilizer.com/university/fertuniv04.htm

Yardcare.com: www.yardcare.com/expertadvice/buildinglawn/soiltype.html

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http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/drain_commissioner/dc_cpcs.html

