

Ask about Phosphorus-free Lawn Fertilizers...

To conserve local habitats and improve Indiana's water quality!



What is Phosphorus?

- A naturally-occurring nutrient that plants only use in small quantities for growth & energy storage

Why is it a problem?

- Excess phosphorus travels into rivers, streams, and lakes resulting in algal blooms and undesirable plant growth
- 1 lb. Phosphorus can result in the growth of 10,000 lbs. weeds¹
- Algae overgrowth turns water green and makes it unsustainable for many species due to the lack of food, oxygen, and viable habitats
- Phosphorus damages the natural habitats, and biodiversity declines

How can this influence my health?

- Quality of drinking water is affected, indicated by poor taste and smell
- Some algae can produce toxins causing skin irritations
- If consumed, this water can lead to gastrointestinal problems and damage to internal systems or even major organs
- Harmful for pets, including livestock to consume contaminated water



Algal bloom White River (IUPUI Center for Earth and Environmental Science, 2009)

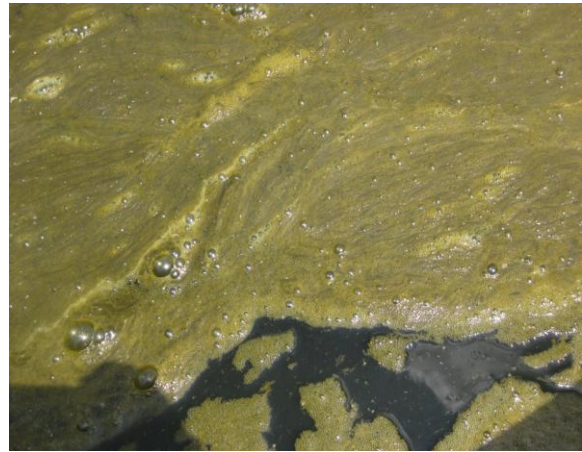
What precautions should I take?

- Be aware of contact with contaminated water
- Follow state restrictions and advisories
- Always wash thoroughly after contact with affected watersheds

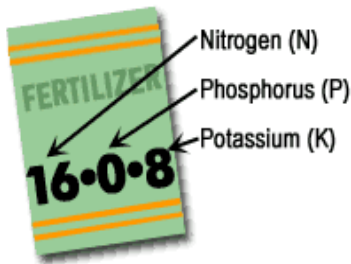
¹ <http://www.indiana.edu/~clp/documents/WATER%20COL%20V18,%20N1.pdf>

How can I help?

- Only use phosphorus in your fertilizer if you have a new lawn or a soil test indicates a low level of phosphorus
- Don't over-fertilize your lawn. On average, 89% of Indiana lawns do **not** need phosphorus according to a 2004 survey by Purdue²
- Best time to fertilize is in the fall, especially September³. If the ground is frozen, do not apply fertilizer
- Clean up any fertilizer spills on impervious surfaces, such as driveways
- Use grass clippings and fallen leaves as natural mulch
- Tell family and friends about the problems of excess phosphorus!



A closer look at the White River (IUPUI Center for Earth and Environmental Science, 2009)



What should I do before I fertilize my lawn?

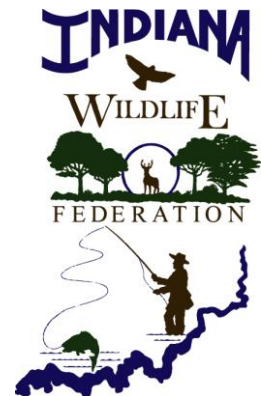
- Check the label on the fertilizer bag to make sure the middle number is zero
- The first and last numbers indicate the concentrations of two additional nutrients: nitrogen & potassium
- Visit your local lawn care center and ask for **phosphorus-free** fertilizer!

Where can I buy it?

- Lawn care shops including Lowes, Home Depot, or your local garden center
- Some brand names to look for: Scotts, Pennington, Sta-Green, Lesco, or Rebel
- If you use a lawn care service, try these companies: TruGreen & NaturaLawn of America
- Prices are comparable for phosphorus-free fertilizer!

For more information, contact the Indiana Wildlife Federation (www.indianawildlife.org), or read more at Indiana Department of Environmental Management (www.in.gov/idem/algae/), Indiana Lakes Management Society (<http://www.indianalakes.org/lawnCare.htm>), and Indiana Clean Lakes Program (<http://www.indiana.edu/~clp/>)⁴

**This project is made possible through a generous grant from Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust.*



² <http://www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/report/2006/10.pdf>

³ <http://www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/pubs/ay-22.pdf>

⁴ General Sources: <http://www.ipni.net/>; <http://www.cees.iupui.edu/>; <http://www.in.gov/idem/algae/>