



Fertilize in the fall for early spring green

Fertilizing during the early fall season can help strengthen your lawn's roots for an early spring green! Applying fertilizer in the cooler temperatures and rain of early fall provides your lawn with the nutrients it needs to recover from the hot summer months.

Remember that storm drains found in our streets and yards empty into our lakes and streams. So, when we fertilize our lawn we could also be fertilizing our lakes and streams! While fertilizer is good for our lawn, it's bad for our water. Fertilizer that enters our lakes and streams can cause algae to grow and use up oxygen that fish need to survive.

Here are some tips to help you care for your lawn and help to protect our lakes and streams:

- **Buy low and go slow.** First, find out if you even need fertilizer! Contact your Michigan State University Extension office to get a soil test. If you do need it, choose a fertilizer with no or low phosphorus--phosphorus causes algae growth. You can also use an organic or slow-release nitrogen fertilizer, which causes less harm to water.
- **Sweep it.** Sweep excess fertilizer and grass clippings from pavement back onto your lawn so that they don't wash into storm drains.
- **Hire smart.** Select a lawn care service that follows the practices noted above.
- **Mow high.** Keep your lawn at three inches in height. Taller grass strengthens roots and shades out weeds. Also, remember that the nutrients from grass clippings left on your lawn act as a great fertilizer.
- **Make fertilizer-free zones.** Keep fertilizer at least 20 feet away from the edge of any lakes, streams, or storm drains.

Interested in knowing more? SEMCOG's Web site — www.semco.org — contains additional information and tips on things we can do to keep our water clean. After all, it's our water, our future, ours to protect.

SEMCOG is a regional planning partnership of local governmental units serving 4.9 million people in the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan striving to enhance the region's quality of life. The Village of Dexter is a member of SEMCOG.