

Healthy Yards . . . Healthy Lakes and Streams

What we do in our yards can directly affect our lakes and streams. Before using fertilizer on your lawn or gardens, test your soil. A \$15 soil test will show if your soil is lacking anything so that you don't waste your money on something you don't even need. Instructions and forms from the UW Soil and Plant Analysis Lab are online at <http://uwlab.soils.wisc.edu/madison/>. Results will tell you exactly what you need for healthy lawn and gardens.

If your test shows you do indeed need fertilizer, be sure to clean up any that lands on your sidewalk, driveway or other hard surfaces. If left on paved areas, it can easily make its way to the nearest lake or stream with the next rainfall. Keeping leaves, grass clippings and other yard waste, which contain nitrogen and phosphorus, out of the street also help prevent lakes and streams from becoming green and scummy. When these nutrients wash into lakes and streams they can promote nasty algae blooms and excessive weed growth (which can lower oxygen levels in the water) and may release ammonia (toxic to fish).

Healthy yards add to the beauty and value of your home. They can also help our lakes and streams by allowing rainwater to soak into the soil rather than running off to the nearest storm drain. So, do your part and keep your lakes and streams healthy by using fertilizers only if and where they are needed.