

Water Watch



Fertilizing the Lawn

Nearly everyone appreciates a well cared for lawn. To achieve the healthiest green lawn, many people turn to chemical fertilizers. Unfortunately, lawn fertilizers pose several risks to human health and water quality.

Hazardous chemicals in fertilizers include ammonium nitrate, ammonium phosphate, ammonium sulfate, pesticides and potassium chloride. Fertilizers can be corrosive to skin, eyes and mucous membranes and can potentially affect water quality. See the article on illegal dumping for a discussion on how fertilizer affects water quality.



Fertilizer Use

When using fertilizers, read labels carefully to ensure that you are properly protected and that you use the right amount of fertilizer for your lawn. Don't fertilize before

predicted heavy rain and be careful along lawn edges. Fertilizer left on sidewalks and driveways can easily be washed into storm water.

It is suggested that slow-release fertilizer is less-hazardous. Look for bags that have the word "WIN" on them. This indicates that the fertilizer contains water insoluble nitrogen.

Leftover Fertilizer

If you have fertilizer left over, store it in a sealed and labeled plastic bag and keep it away from children, pets and water.

If you don't want to store it, it is best to find someone who can use it.

Disposal

Empty fertilizer bags that do not contain pesticides and weed killers can be disposed of in the garbage. If the fertilizer contains pesticide, please follow directions under "pesticides" on your product's label to dispose of properly.

If you can't find any way of using up the product, you may dispose of it by placing it in a heavy duty plas-

tic bag. Please call the North Utah County District Landfill at 225-8170 and let them know you are bringing in fertilizer. This makes sure the fertilizer is handled safely.

Reducing The Need For Fertilizer

You can reduce the amount of fertilizer you need by frequently mowing your lawn with a mulching mower to a height of three inches and leaving the clippings on the lawn.

Using compost and soil amendments also reduces the need for fertilizer. A



guide to composting is available in PDF format at the Utah State University extension website at <http://www.extension.usu.edu/publications/gardpubs/compos01.pdf>. Or you can call them at 370-8460 with questions about lawn and garden care.

Source

Eliminating Household Hazardous Waste. Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. Boise, Idaho. 1999. Pp 12-13.

Some Thoughts on Pet Waste

If you wouldn't drink it, don't dump it!

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Many people enjoy having pets and caring for them. But have you thought about the impact pets may have on water quality?

In reality, pet waste can be a major polluter. Studies in Seattle have shown pet waste to be the main pollutant in one its main waterways.

So what problems can occur when pet owners allow pet waste to be washed into storm water? There are two pollutants that come from pet waste that can cause problems for water quality: nutrients and bacteria..

Nutrients from pet waste cause a process known as eutrophication. This leads to an increase in weed and algae growth. The weeds and green water can make boating and fishing difficult or undesirable.

This greening of the water can block sunlight affecting bottom-rooted plants. When nutrient levels lessen, the weeds and algae decompose using oxygen and possibly causing fish kills.

Other sources of nutrient pollution include leaves and grass clippings as well as excess fertilizers.

Bacteria from pet wastes can cause a variety of symptoms from nausea to diarrhea to rash and even death in people with weakened immune systems.

City ordinance requires pet owners to clean up after pets. Violations can result in fines.

So how can a pet owner take care of waste responsibly? There are a couple of options for pet waste disposal.

The first option is to bag the pet waste and throw it away in the garbage. This is a legal way to dispose of pet waste.

Another suggestion is to bury the waste. It is suggested that you dig a hole at least one foot deep. You can then place three to four inches of waste in the hole and cover it with at least eight inches of soil.

Keep buried waste away from vegetable gardens and water sources. Don't add pet waste to compost. It will not get hot enough to kill pathogens in pet waste.



Flushing pet waste down the toilet is against City Code.

We should remember that pets don't pollute, people do. Please clean up after your pets.

Sources

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Eggen, Dan. "Creek Pollution Pinned On Pooches". Washington Post. June 8, 1998. p C1.

United States Environmental Protection Agency. "Public Education and Outreach on Storm Water Impacts". http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/edu_8.cfm.

City of Seattle. "What's the Problem With Pet Waste?". <http://www.cityofseattle.net/util/surfacewater/bmp/petwaste.htm>.

University of Wisconsin Extension. "Brown Water, Green Weeds". Madison, Wisconsin. 2001.