

Campaign to Protect and Restore the Taunton River Watershed

“Greening” Your Lawn and Gardens

Lawns/ Gardens

Reducing Your Use of Fertilizer, Toxic Pesticides, and Herbicide on Your Lawn and Gardens

WHY?

Whether you are growing grass, beautiful flowers or delicious vegetables, consider doing this without using fertilizers, toxic pesticides, and herbicides.

Car Care

Pet Waste



Lawn: If you have a lawn, you may be using fertilizers and weed killers to keep it green and weed-free. When it rains, these chemicals are washed into the street. **Storm drains** in the streets collect the runoff and empty it untreated into the nearest waterway. So, when you fertilize or treat your lawn, you could also be fertilizing or harming our lakes and streams. Fertilizer encourages algae growth. This can form large algae blooms and uses up oxygen that fish and other critters need to survive. Pesticides kill aquatic insects and herbicides kill aquatic plants, both of which fish and other species need to survive.

Clean Dishes/ Clean Streams

Gardens: In your gardens, herbicides and pesticides can harm children, pets, and local wildlife and kill helpful insects such as ladybugs and green lacewings that keep real pests in check. Even when used sparingly, these chemicals can end up washing down storm drains, into streams and eventually polluting the local water supply.

Rooftop Runoff

Here's how to create a natural lawn and help protect the health of your family, wildlife, and our local resources.

HOW?

Household Hazardous Waste

- ◆ Get your soils tested and apply fertilizers only at the appropriate time in the right amounts. UMass Extension and URI Extension can help you test your soil and have information about chemical-free lawn and garden care.
- ◆ To naturally strengthen the resistance of your plants and lawn to pests build healthy soil by adding organic matter such as compost. Make your own compost or purchase it.

Pervious Surfaces

- ◆ If you fertilize at all, it's better to use compost instead of chemical fertilizers. Fertilizers act as pollutants once they enter our waterways.
- ◆ If compost doesn't work for you, use an organic or slow-release fertilizer. A slow-release fertilizer has at least half of the nitrogen in water insoluble form. These fertilizers gradually release nitrogen to plant roots. This provides a steady supply of plant nutrients over an extended period of time. Because you need less fertilizer, you will save time and money.

Stream Buffers

- ◆ Select a fertilizer with low or no phosphorus. Most lawns already contain enough phosphorus. Excess phosphorus is the primary culprit of algae blooms in our lakes.
- ◆ Make fertilizer-free zones of at least 20 feet from the edge of lakes, streams or storm drains.
- ◆ Sweep any excess fertilizers back onto the lawn. Do not hose it down to the drain.



<http://www.lismore.nsw.gov>

More →

- ◆ Cut the grass high to encourage the root system, and let the cut grass stay on the lawn to add moisture and act as a natural fertilizer. Don't dispose of grass or leaves in wetland areas, because they will "fertilize" local waters.
- ◆ Overseed thin areas in the spring and fall to crowd out weeds. Just rake to expose the soil, spread the seed, and cover with 1/4 inch of compost or soil.
- ◆ In your garden choose native plants that are naturally pest-resistant, less water-dependent, and adapted to our climate.
- ◆ If unwelcome pests do appear, pull them off by hand or spray them with a diluted solution of phosphate-free soapy water. You can also pick off the affected part of the plant. Remember that insects are part of your garden's ecosystem. The occasional pest in your garden may also be a food source for beneficial insects, amphibians and birds.

RESOURCES

UMass Extension: <http://www.umassgreeninfo.org/>
<http://www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/>

URI Extension: <http://www.uri.edu/ce/factsheets/indices/0lawnmaintindex.html>
<http://www.uri.edu/ce/publications/soiltest.pdf>

Cornell Cooperative Extension:

<http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/lawn/almanac/almanac.pdf>

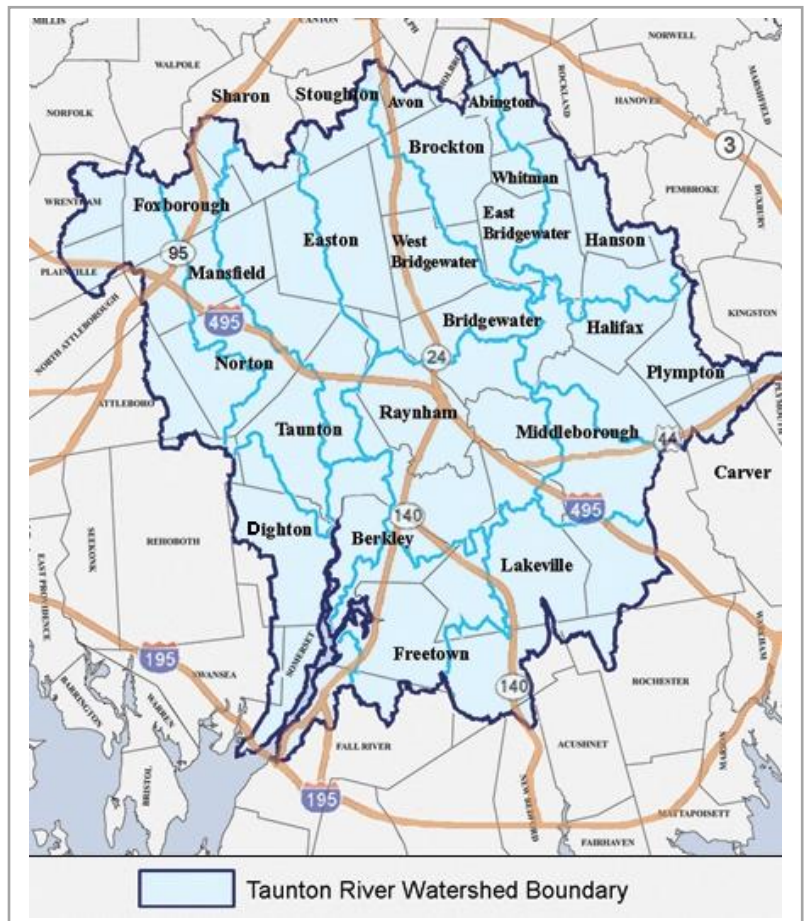
EPA:

<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/greenscapes/index.htm>

BENEFITS

By "greening" your lawn and gardens, you prevent the pollution from fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides from flowing into the storm drains and streams of the Taunton watershed while making your yard a natural and safe place for you, your family, your pets, and your neighbors to enjoy.

If you live within the shaded area on the map, then you live in the Taunton River watershed.



The Taunton River Watershed Alliance is a non-profit alliance of concerned individuals, businesses and organizations who are dedicated to protecting and restoring the Taunton River watershed, its tributaries, wetlands, floodplains, river corridors and wildlife. For more information contact TRWA advocate Priscilla Chapman at 508-828-1104 or pchapman@massaudubon.org.

This guide was adapted from the Blackstone River Coalition's "Tackling Stormwater" series

