



## **Water Quality: What YOU can do to help Silver Lake.** **Tips from the Silver Lake Association's Water Quality Committee**

### Tip Eight: Healthy Lawns and Healthy Lake Tip Sheet

Requirements of the Dishwasher Detergent and Nutrient Runoff Law (Chapter 205 of the laws of 2010) apply to lawn fertilizer and dishwasher detergent. The requirements apply to: homeowners applying fertilizer themselves; landscapers and lawn care professionals pesticide applicators; retailers, distributors and manufacturers of lawn fertilizers; and retailers and manufacturers of automatic dishwasher detergents.

### **Key Requirements of the Law regarding Lawn Fertilizer\*:**

Do NOT use lawn fertilizer that contains **phosphorus** unless (1) you are establishing a new lawn, or (2) a soil test shows that the lawn does not have enough phosphorus. Do NOT apply **any** lawn fertilizer on impervious surfaces, such as sidewalks or driveways. If **any** fertilizer is spilled onto impervious surfaces, you must contain the spill to prevent runoff into drains or waterways. Do NOT apply **any** lawn fertilizer within 20 feet of any surface water, including with a sprayer, unless (1) there is a buffer at least 10 feet wide of planted or naturally occurring vegetation, such as shrubs, trees and plants between the area receiving fertilizer and the water, or (2) fertilizer is applied at least three feet from surface water by a device with a spreader guard, deflector shield or drop spreader. Do NOT apply any lawn fertilizer between December 1st and April 1st. Retailers are required to display phosphorus containing fertilizers separately from non-phosphorus fertilizers and to post an educational sign where the phosphorus fertilizers are displayed. A PDF of an educational sign that retailers may print and use is available on the Important Links section of the right-hand column of this page. \*These provisions DO NOT impact agricultural fertilizer or fertilizer for trees, shrubs or gardens. The phosphorus fertilizer restrictions do apply to fertilizer/pesticide combination products (sometimes called "weed and feeds") when these products contain over 0.67% phosphorus. The law does also apply to organic phosphorus fertilizer (such as bone meal), but does not apply to compost.

### **Penalties:**

For an owner, owner's agent, or occupant of a household, the penalties are: issuance of a written warning with educational materials for a first violation; a fine of up to \$100 for a second violation; and fines up to \$250 for subsequent violations. The penalties for all others are: a fine up to \$500 for a first of violation; and fines up to \$1000 for subsequent offenses.

### **Tips for Compliance:**

**Choosing the Right Fertilizer:** Fertilizer labels have three bold numbers, e.g. **22-0-15**. The number in the middle is the percentage of phosphorus in the product. Use of products with 0.67 in the middle or lower is allowed. Products with a number higher than 0.67 may only be used if a new lawn is being established or a soil test indicates it is necessary. This includes natural fertilizer products, such as bone meal.

**Getting a Soil Test:** DEC recommends that soil testing be done by a laboratory that routinely performs soil nutrient analysis testing. A soil lab will interpret the test results and will provide the information to you. Labs can be found through a web search or through the local Cornell Cooperative Extension office. Tests generally cost in the \$10 to \$20 range (in 2015). Soil may also be tested using a home test kit, but these tests tend to be less accurate and do not come with fertilizer recommendations.