

# HOLD THE PHOSPHOROUS

Calling all lawn enthusiasts: Here's a tip that could save you money. Don't pour phosphorous-based fertilizers on your grass. Many local soils don't need additional fertilizer, and phosphorous is a major contributor to algae growth in our streams and Lake Erie.

Think about your drinking water during the hottest of summer months. Too much algae decaying in the warm lake and your water will smell and could taste like algae soup!



Too much phosphorous can lead to algal blooms in our streams

For the last four years, the Cuyahoga SWCD has teamed up with the Cuyahoga County Water Quality Lab to perform soil tests for homeowners. The results are in and the soils that have been tested are rich in nutrients, which means, less fertilizer needs to be applied.

Now, that is good news for your wallet and your drinking water.

Natural headwater streams and wetlands have many important functions. They maintain natural flood control, trap sediment, provide important habitat and process nutrients—including phosphorus. However, as the landscape has been developed, these important headwater systems have been paved over, channelized and drained. Rooftops, downspouts, driveways and roadside ditches are now the true headwaters of our urban and suburban watersheds.

By installing rain barrels and rain gardens, and reducing the application of lawn fertilizers, we mimic these lost natural functions in our yards and neighborhoods, turning our local streets into "Headwater Streets".

## So what can be done if a homeowner desires green healthy grass?

Get your soil tested to determine its fertility. Go to [www.cuyahogaswcd.org](http://www.cuyahogaswcd.org) to learn more.

If your soil requires nutrients, use compost instead of store-bought inorganic fertilizers.

If you must fertilize, use a 'slow release' organic fertilizer which is gradually broken down by microbes in the soil so plants use the nutrients before they wash off into our streams.

Reduce exposed soil as runoff carries phosphorous to local waterways.

Do not dump grass clippings in rivers or down streambanks as they contain phosphorous. Keep clippings in a compost bin to use later as mulch.

Set your mower to cut high (3-4"). Taller grass absorbs more and reduces stress on the grass.

Use a mulching mower that chops up the grass clippings, or leave the clippings on the grass to decompose and provide organic fertilizer that the earthworms and soil love.

And you will help keep organic matter out of landfills.

Watch our website for Composting Workshops later this year and learn more about rain gardens, rain barrels and other best management practices that will transform you from a turf enthusiast to a backyard habitat steward, and make your street a Headwater Street.



Claire Posius, Euclid Creek Watershed Coordinator  
216-524-6580, ext. 16  
[www.cuyahogaswcd.org](http://www.cuyahogaswcd.org)  
[eposius@cuyahogaswcd.org](mailto:eposius@cuyahogaswcd.org)

