

Using Phosphorus-free Lawn Fertilizers



If your lakefront property on Rosen Lake has a lawn, please consider using **no-phosphorus** lawn fertilizer this summer. Phosphorus is the middle number on the fertilizer bag—ie 22 – 0 -15 fertilizer has no phosphorus while 22 -9 – 12 does!

Questions and Answers

◆ **Why use lawn fertilizer without phosphorus around Rosen Lake?**

A: *It is estimated that just one pound of phosphorus in the water will produce 500 pounds of blue-green algae.* Most soils in East Kootenay naturally provide all the phosphorus your established lawn needs. Much of the phosphorus (phosphate) you apply actually runs off the lawn before penetrating the soil. That means it gets into the lake and may contribute to possible blue-green algae bloom and growth of other undesirable aquatic plants.

For this reason, many US states have imposed a ban on the use of lawn fertilizer with phosphorus. Several Ontario lakes have had these poisonous algae blooms, making it dangerous to swim or boat in their lakes!

◆ **How do I know there's no phosphorus in my fertilizer?**

A: Check the second number on the package formula. **15—0—10**, for example, means zero phosphate. The first number is the nitrogen content, the middle number is the phosphorus content and the last number is the potassium content. **Make sure the middle number on the bag is 0 indicating it is phosphorus free.**

◆ **Does my lawn need phosphorus?**

A: No. Unless you have a newly seeded lawn, most soil provides all the phosphorus your established lawn needs.

◆ **How does phosphorus damage a lake, stream or pond?**

A: Phosphorus encourages the blue-green algae bloom that lakes are at risk of experiencing each summer. Blue - green alga not only stinks but can be toxic to animals and children. When the algae bloom decays it reduces the oxygen in the water and can cause fish kills. Phosphorus run-off from feed lots, agricultural land and lawns is the main contributor to phosphorus in the lakes.

◆ **When should I feed my lawn?**

A: The best time to fertilize is in May and early June or in September or early October.

◆ **What are some other things I can do to make my lawn more lake friendly?**

1. Avoid letting fertilizer wash off the turf.
2. Don't fertilize when the soil is saturated with moisture.
3. Avoid getting fertilizer on driveways, patios and pathways.
4. Use a mulching mower to leave the grass clippings on the turf.

5. Cut no more than the top third of the grass. Leaving about 3 inches height shades the roots and helps reduce erosion and runoff.
6. Rake and recycle your leaves in the fall. Don't let them blow into the lake.

◆ Where can I buy no-phosphorus fertilizer?

A: You can buy 20-0-15 and 31-0-6 versions of *CIL Golfgreen* fertilizer at Rona and Canadian Tire. Also, *Scott's Turfbuilder* and *So-Green Ultraturf* have several phosphorous free versions. Watch for the "phosphate free" labelling!