



Preserving our natural resources starts in your yard.

One of the most important ways to ensure good water quality is to limit the amount of phosphorus applied to our landscapes. The reason is simple. When too many products containing phosphorus are used, the nutrient can go directly to our water supply, causing serious pollution problems and health concerns. Thankfully, there is an easy solution.

Homeowners should test their soil before using fertilizers.

A simple test can quickly and accurately measure the levels of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, and pH present in your soil. If the test indicates that phosphorus is not needed, a fertilizer with zero phosphorus should be applied. If phosphorus is present in sufficient quantities, more phosphorus will not benefit your landscape, and it may go directly to our water supply. Soil testing prior to applying fertilizers will help to protect our water and environment.



How Does Phosphorus Cause Pollution and Health Problems?

Too much phosphorus in reservoir water stimulates the growth of unwanted vegetation such as algae (i.e. algae blooms) during warm weather. You have probably seen lakes and reservoirs that look like they are covered by a blanket of green slime – that's unwanted algae growth that may be caused in part by phosphorus coming from your over-fertilized property.

Algae blooms adversely impact drinking water quality by:

- 1 causing offensive taste, odors, and color
- 2 interfering with the disinfection process, which protects us from disease-carrying microorganisms
- 3 contributing to the formation of hazardous disinfection by-products, and
- 4 hurting fish and wildlife.



This resource is worth saving.

That's why a committee of dedicated scientists, government officials, and industry leaders have developed methods for protecting New York's water resources.

Help to protect our water by following sound landscape practices. *You can make a difference.*

If you use the services of a landscaper, just ask for a soil test before fertilizer is applied. If you do your own yard work, it is easy to take a soil sample yourself. Instructions on how to sample your soil can be obtained from Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE). The telephone numbers and addresses for the Putnam and Westchester County CCE offices are presented on the back of this brochure.

Once collected, the soil sample should be mailed to the Nutrient Analysis Lab at Cornell University or to a private soil testing laboratory for a modest fee. Contact information for private labs and additional information concerning soil testing can be obtained from your local CCE office. Remember, the water of New York is one of the most valuable resources we have. Let's all work together to preserve it!



**The following organizations
are working together to
protect water quality**

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Gaia Institute
GreenPoint of New York
NYC Department of Environmental
Protection
NYS Department of Environmental
Conservation
NYS Department of Health
NYS Office of the Attorney General
NYS Turf and Landscape Association
Putnam County
United States Environmental Protection
Agency
Westchester County

**You may obtain soil testing
information from:**

Cornell Cooperative Extension of
Westchester County
26 Legion Drive
Valhalla, NY 10595
914-285-4640
www.cce.cornell.edu/westchester

Cornell Cooperative Extension of
Putnam County
Terravest Corporate Park
1 Geneva Road
Brewster, NY 10509
845-278-6738
www.cce.cornell.edu/putnam

**There are few
more important
things than our
family or our water...**

