

Go Phosphorus-Free For West Hill Pond!

A Brief Overview of the Negative Effects of Phosphorus on a Body of Water, Phosphorus-Free Products and Tips For Lake Health

The Effects of Phosphorus

Phosphorus is a plant nutrient found in many lawn and garden fertilizers, cleaning products, manure, human and animal waste, and in some cleaning products.

Pollution from phosphates, an essential nutrient in minute quantities, can easily overwhelm waterways. Very small changes in phosphorus levels, such as those we have experienced at West Hill Pond, encourage the process of eutrophication. Eutrophication occurs when the addition of phosphates into an aquatic system creates an excess of nutrients, stimulating the growth of algae blooms and beds of rooted aquatic plants.

The increased biological production of nuisance plants increases shoal areas and produces more dead plant material, the accelerated decay of which depletes the surrounding aquatic ecosystem of necessary oxygen. These hypoxic conditions lead to the reduction and eventual elimination of other fish and animal populations. Waters turn turbid, and green, yellow, brown, or red, clouded by an overabundance of microscopic plant life and free-floating weeds. Gravel beds and rocks become covered with slime and waving mosses, and submerged weeds cover the lake bottom. **The addition of one pound of phosphorus can result in 500 pounds of wet algae.**

Eutrophication adversely affects recreation, fishing, hunting, and aesthetic enjoyment, and decreases property values.

Fortunately, cutting down on phosphates is easy to do.

Good News About Products

Laundry Detergent:

Connecticut has for many years banned or strictly limited phosphates in laundry detergent. You can easily find phosphorus-free laundry detergents at your local supermarket. All, Extra, Arm & Hammer, Purex, and virtually all others spot-checked in the New Hartford Stop & Shop are phosphorus-free. But you can always check labels.

Dishwashing Liquid:

Most, if not all, dishwashing liquids are also phosphorus-free. Stop & Shop Pure Power, Palmolive, GV, Ajax, are among these. You can check the label.

Dishwasher Detergent:

Check labels carefully. There are numerous phosphate-free machine dishwashing detergent alternatives, including Palmolive Eco, Smarty Dish, Pure Power, and some of the Cascade types, both liquid and powder. Just make sure it says on the container "CONTAINS NO PHOSPHATES." On July 1, 2010, a voluntary ban on phosphates in dishwashing detergents was implemented by many members of the

American Cleaning Council. A manufacturers trade group representing most detergent companies.

Stain Removers:

Two phosphorus-free stain removers are Resolve and Shout. Other cleaning products, check the label always.

Lawn Products:

While some states are passing laws restricting phosphorus levels in lawn-care products, Connecticut has not. Most lawns don't require fertilizer to be healthy and green all summer long, but there are many phosphorus-free lawn fertilizers.

Vigoro Super Lawn Fertilizer and Vigoro Ultra Turf Fertilizer are phosphorus-free, and brands such as Agway, Espoma, Miracle Gro, and others also carry some phosphorus-free lines of fertilizers. Scott, the leading national seller of lawn-care products, announced an initiative on March 22, 2011, to make all of their lawn-care fertilizers phosphorus-free in 2012.

To check whether a fertilizer contains phosphorus, look for the three numbers on the bag. The middle number indicates phosphorus content. For example, thirty-zero-four means the product is phosphorus-free. When contracting with a lawn service, insist they use one of the many, readily-available phosphorus-free fertilizers.

Note: Restrictions on phosphorus in cleaning products and law fertilizers do not presently cover commercial and agricultural use.

We Can Make A Difference

Here are additional suggestions for reducing phosphorus runoff and preserving the quality of our lake:

- Keep site disturbance to a minimum, especially removal of natural vegetation and exposure of bare soil.
- Leave naturally vegetated areas (buffer strips) and trees along shoreline.
- Plant deeply rooted, woody vegetation along shoreline (ex. Tall grasses, flowers, shrubs, trees- the wider the strip the better).
- Don't put branches, leaves, or any organic matter into the lake.
- Preserve natural topography and drainage systems.
- Leave existing rocks in place along the shoreline.
- Don't wash cars near the lake.
- Prevent water from running directly into the lake; detain in depressions or divert into flat, wooded areas.
- Plan pervious driveways.
- Reduce or stop use of lawn fertilizers-organic is better.
- Reduce food debris passing through septic tanks (use garbage disposal less)