



Preserve **Falmouth's Bays and Ponds**

Preserve Falmouth's Bays and Ponds is a community outreach campaign dedicated to saving Falmouth's coastal waters and ponds. This campaign is part of Falmouth's ongoing Nitrogen Offset Program for Bournes, Green and Great Ponds as funded by the Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence (AFCEE). As part of this effort, Preserve Falmouth's Bays and Ponds has launched an educational program encouraging residents to adopt lawn care practices that prevent nitrogen leaching.





Preserve **Falmouth's Bays and Ponds**

Studies have shown that pollution in Bournes, Green and Great Ponds and all other Town waters comes from three major sources. Nitrogen leaching from septic systems is the main source. The other two major sources are chemical fertilizers and, lastly, atmospheric deposition which

is beyond our control. As much as 15% of the nitrogen pollution, which causes rapid algae growth, is coming from the chemical fertilizers we put on our lawns. This means we can eliminate 15% of the problem by adopting some simple lawn care practices.





Growing a Falmouth Friendly Lawn

TEST YOUR SOIL

- The pH of your soil should be between 6.5 – 7.0.
- If your pH is too low, you need to add lime, which acts as a gatekeeper of soil nutrients.
- 50 lbs. of lime per 1000 square feet of lawn area can raise your pH by as much as 1 point.
- If you fertilize a lawn with a low pH, the nitrogen in the fertilizer won't be absorbed by the grass resulting in an unhealthy lawn and nitrogen leaching.

The **Master Gardeners** offer soil testing clinics throughout the spring. You can contact them at the **Cape Cod Extension Office** in Barnstable by calling **508-375-6690**. You can also bring in a sample to The Cape Cod Extension Office where they offer soil testing year round. You can also purchase a simple soil test at any local garden center or hardware store.

DRESS YOUR SOIL

- Grass grows best with 6" of topsoil.
- If your soil is not at least six inches deep, add 1/4 to 1/2 inch of loam each spring. This is called topdressing.
- Loam that contains an equal blend of silt, sand and clay provides the best foundation for preventing nitrogen leaching.
- After topdressing your soil, overseed with a mixture of either tall fescue or fine fescue and perennial ryegrass since these grasses will thrive with less nitrogen.





Growing a Falmouth Friendly Lawn

CONTINUED ...

REDUCE FERTILIZER USE

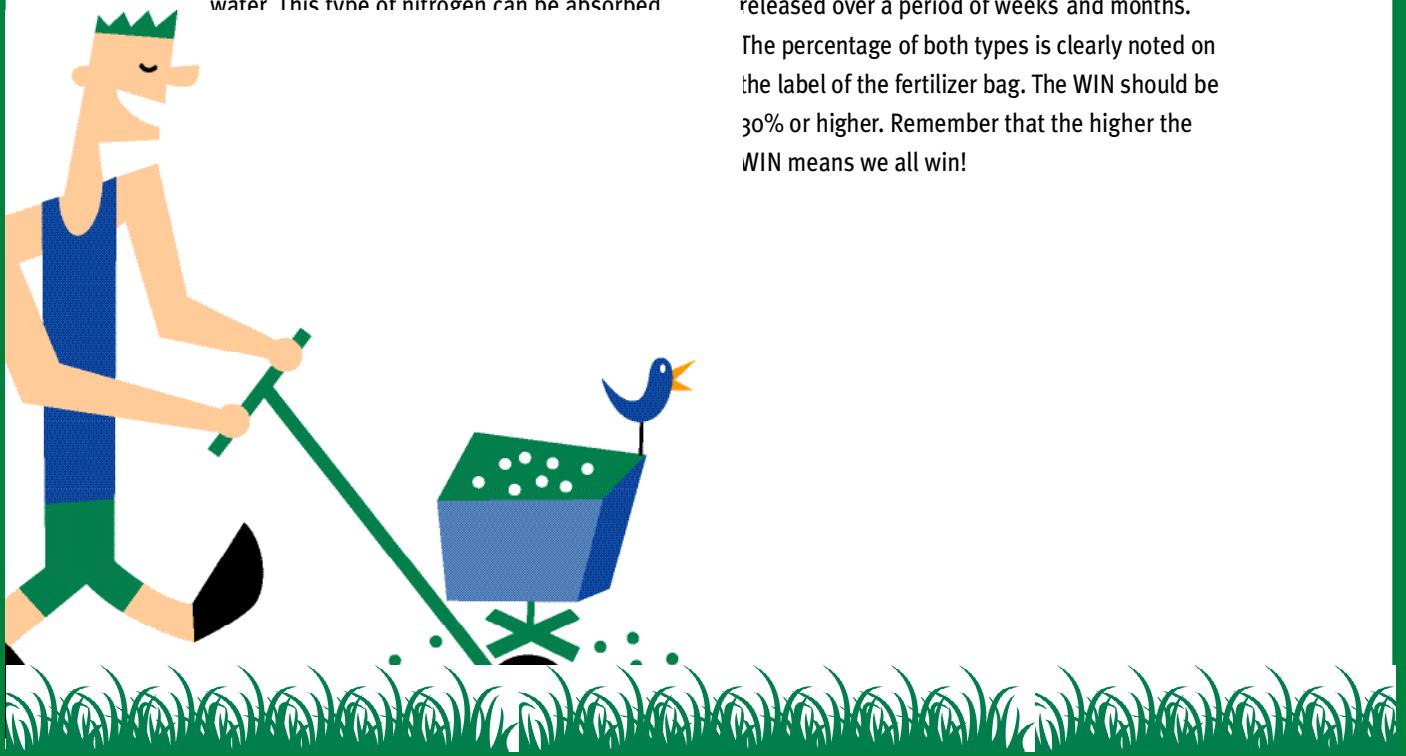
First, pace off the length and the width of your lawn. Assume that each pace equals three feet. Multiplying the length by the width will tell you how many square feet of lawn you have.

- Only use as much fertilizer as you need for your amount of lawn. If a standard bag of fertilizer covers 5,000 sq ft. and you only have 2,500 sq ft of lawn, just use half the bag.
- If the bag of fertilizer suggests an application rate of 1 lb. of nitrogen at a certain spreader setting, reduce the spreader setting by 1/2. For example, lower the recommended spreader setting from 6 to 3 to achieve the 1/2 lb rate.
- After applying the fertilizer, sweep your walks and driveways to prevent the fertilizer from running off after watering or rain.

UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE BUYING

There are two primary types of nitrogen listed on the fertilizer bag:

1. **Water Soluble Nitrogen (WSN)** is man made and is released when it comes in contact with water. This type of nitrogen can be absorbed quickly by the lawn.
2. **Water Insoluble Nitrogen (WIN)** is usually derived from natural sources and is slowly released over a period of weeks and months. The percentage of both types is clearly noted on the label of the fertilizer bag. The WIN should be 30% or higher. Remember that the higher the WIN means we all win!





Growing a Falmouth Friendly Lawn

CONTINUED ...

WHEN SHOULD I FERTILIZE?

- Fertilize once in the spring when the ground is soft using slow release or organic fertilizer.
- Fertilize again in early fall.

MOWING

- Keep your lawn mower set at its highest cutting height.
- Never cut more than 1/3 of the shoot growth at one mowing or you will damage your lawn by removing too much of the grass blade.
- Make sure the mower blades are sharp. Dull blades damage your lawn by bending and breaking the blade of grass instead of cutting it.
- Leave the clippings on the lawn. That's right, no raking! Clippings left on your lawn add a natural slow acting source of nitrogen to your lawn.

PLANT & GROW NATIVE SHRUBS

You can reduce the amount of lawn area by creating a naturalized planting of low maintenance native shrubs and plants. Contact either the Master Gardeners at the Cape Cod Extension Office **508-375-6690** or the Cape Cod Conservation District at **508-771-8757** for suggested plant materials.

PLANTING GRASSES



lawns.

They have good drought tolerance and most new varieties offer resistance to surface feeding insects.

- The nitrogen requirement for bluegrass lawns can be twice as much. If your lawn is mostly bluegrass, overseed with fescues and rye grasses after topdressing.



Growing a Falmouth Friendly Lawn

CONTINUED ...

PULL WEEDS

- ➊ If you find weeds pull them out by hand. If weeds are a severe problem, spot treat them with an organic spray.

WATERING

Proper watering is essential.

- ➋ Your lawn requires only one inch of water per week. One early morning watering is best. This weekly watering will help your lawn grow deeper roots.
- ➌ How do you measure an inch of water? It's really quite simple. Set open tuna cans (preferably straight sided) in various places in your lawn. A full can equals an inch of water.
- ➍ Leave a can out for the season to monitor rainfall. Of course remember to obey any water restrictions that may be in effect.





What to tell your Lawn Service



If you have a Lawn Service

TELL YOUR LAWN SERVICE TO:

- Test your soil. This test will indicate the amount of fertilizer needed.
The soil test will also indicate the need for lime, which acts as the gatekeeper of soil nutrients.
- Use slow release or organic fertilizers with at least 30% WIN.
- Fertilize in the spring and fall only.
- Organically spot treat weeds instead of treating the whole lawn.
- Overseed with Cape friendly grasses such as fine fescue or tall fescue mixed with some perennial ryegrass.

For more information on Preserve Falmouth Bays and Ponds please visit:
www.geocities.com/ashumet2001 or call Hila Lyman at 508-548-0841



Your Falmouth friendly Lawn Care Plan

March

- Remove debris from lawn (sticks, leaves etc.)
- Have your lawn mower serviced (tune up, sharpen blades).
- Pace length and width of your lawn to determine square footage.
- Spread 1/4 to 1/2 inch of loam on your lawn in order to build soil base.
- Test your soil's pH. Soil pH should be 6.5-7. Fifty pounds Of lime per 1,000 square feet of lawn area can raise your pH by as much as 1 point.

April

- Vigorously rake lawn removing dead grass and debris.
- If grass pulls up easily, dig into the soil looking for grubs.
- If grubs are found, treat lawn areas with an organic grub killer that is NOT blended with fertilizer.
- Set out tuna cans in order to begin monitoring rainfall and watering amounts.
- Begin mowing as needed with mower blades on highest setting.

May

- Overseed and patch bare areas of your lawn using Falmouth Friendly grasses such as tall fescues and fine fescues blended with perennial rye grasses.
- Fertilize your lawn (Remember more is not better).
 - Reduce the spreader setting by 1/2
 - Sweep walkways and driveways after fertilizing
- Water your lawn once per week and continue to monitor rainfall as well.
- Pull weeds as necessary or spot treat with organic products.

June

- Continue weekly watering and mow when needed.
(Remember to obey any water restrictions.)
- Check for surface feeding insects using this easy test.
 - Push a coffee can (open at both ends) into the soil.
 - Fill the can with soapy water.
 - Any insects will float to the top and will be agitated.
 - If insects are found, treat the area with an organic insect control product.

July

- Continue weekly watering and mow when needed.
- Monitor rainfall
- Pull weeds as necessary or spot treat with organic products.

August

- Continue weekly watering and mow when needed.
- Monitor rainfall.
- Check brown patches for the presence of grubs.
 - If grass pulls up easily, dig into the soil looking for grubs.
 - If grubs are found, treat lawn areas with an organic insect control product.
- Spread 1/4 to 1/2 inch of loam on your lawn in order to build soil base.
- Overseed and patch bare areas of your lawn using Falmouth Friendly grasses such as tall fescues and fine fescues blended with perennial rye grasses.

September

- Continue weekly watering and mow when needed.
- Fertilize your lawn (Remember more is not better).
 - Reduce the spreader setting by 1/2
 - Sweep walkways and driveways after fertilizing
- Now is a good time to aerate compacted soil.

October

- Rake your lawn removing leaves, sticks, acorns etc.
- Toward the end of the month, cut your lawn with the blades set at the lowest setting.
- Test your soil's pH. Soil pH should be 6.5-7. Fifty pounds Of lime per 1,000 square feet of lawn area can raise your pH by as much as 1 point.

