

Algal Blooms

High levels of phosphorus and nitrogen present in waterways are promoting the growth of blue green and other problem algae, especially in the **summer months**. Algae use excess phosphorus and nitrogen to grow and multiply rapidly. Algae thrive when the weather is warm and sunny and the water flow is slow.

Algal blooms:

- can be toxic to humans and animals
- are unsightly and foul smelling
- kill aquatic fauna such as native fish by starving them of oxygen.

Help clean up our waterways and wetlands!





Fertiliser Use

Nutrients are essential for plant growth but only low levels of phosphorus can be retained in Swan's porous soils as they contain low amounts of metals, clay, silt and organic matter. These materials are needed to bind the phosphorus. Overuse of fertiliser will cost you more in garden maintenance and will find its way into our waterways and wetlands through stormwater or groundwater.

- Fertilise only when symptoms of nutrient deficiency such as yellowing occurs. Yellowing only requires a small application of nitrogen.
- If fertiliser is needed try to apply in small quantities in spring. Do not apply to lawns just before or during winter as they are dormant and the fertiliser will be wasted and washed off by rainfall or sprinklers.
- Apply compost (organic matter) to your garden to increase its phosphorus binding capacity and thus reduce the amount of wasted fertiliser.

Green lawns = Green waterways and wetlands

Lawn Care

- Don't mow your lawn too short—long blades of grass shade the roots, reducing water requirements.
- Reduce fertiliser and water use to the minimum so that your lawn doesn't grow too quickly. This will also reduce how often you need to mow.
- Consider reducing your lawn by planting native gardens or paving more areas. This will save you time, money and water.

Pesticides

- Pesticides include fungicides, insecticides and herbicides and should be used as a last option. Those used should be non-residual in nature.
- Excessive and repeated use of pesticides can build up resistance in the pest, making the pesticide no longer effective. Make sure you only apply the directed amount.

Garden Wise Techniques

 Grow plants that have low fertiliser requirements and are drought resistant. WA local natives are great for gardens. Ask your local native nursery about which ones are best for your soil type. Grow Local Plant brochures are available on the SERCUL website for the main soil types in Perth—

www.sercul.org.au/fertilise_wise.html

- Plant your garden in April and May for the best establishment and survival rates.
- Group plants with similar water and fertiliser requirements together.
- Mulch garden beds. This will reduce watering and therefore the amount of nutrients seeping through the soil and into our waterways and wetlands.
- When planting natives you only need to place a tiny amount of slow-release fertiliser as well as composted animal manure in the hole with the plant.

The right fertiliser, in the right amount, at the right time, with the right amount of water, is right for our waterways and wetlands.

Other things you can do include:

- Pick up your dogs droppings. It is estimated that between 10% and 20% of phosphorus that comes from residential areas comes from pet faeces. Dog droppings left near our waterways and wetlands will eventually leach nutrients into the water.
- Don't feed the water birds. The bread that is fed to the water birds contains enough nutrients to turn a lake the size of a backyard swimming pool nutrient rich. Feeding bread to the birds also make them very malnourished and prone to disease. If you must feed them try snails and worms (that haven't been poisoned).
- Clean out your gutters. This will prevent nutrients from leaching into our waterways and wetlands.
- Try using alternative cleaners such as vinegar, lemon and bicarbonate soda. For a full list of useful alternative cleaners go to
 www.sercul.org.au/docs/Alternative_Cleaners.pdf
- Try buying phosphorus free detergents. Look for key words such as zeolite, alternative builders, phosphorus/phosphate free. Avoid words such as phosphate builders, polyphosphates or STPP (sodium tri-polyphosphates). Look for clothes detergents with a NP label. This means no phosphorus. Remember biodegradable does not mean phosphorus free.
- Prevent soil, grass clippings and leaves from entering our waterways and wetlands or any storm water drains in your area. Make sure you sweep (not hose down) areas after gardening.
- Wash your car on the lawn or go to a car wash that uses recycled water. This helps prevent detergents and cleaning products from entering our waterways and wetlands from your closest stormwater drain.

Clean drain = Waterways and wetlands gain

For more information you can try any of the following:

Contact the Phosphorus Awareness Project Coordinator on **9458 5664** or **amykrupa@sercul.org.au**

Explore the Water Corporation's waterwise tips by clicking on the 'Being Waterwise' link on their website **www.watercorporation.com.au**

Look out for Fertiliser Wise Guides in your local nursery or garden centre for more specific information. Alternatively download the brochures from www.sercul.org.au/fertilise_wise.html

Contact the City of Swan on 9267 9267.

To purchase native plants look in the Yellow Pages for your closest native nursery.

Acknowledgments

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Waterways & Wetlands

Help safeguard our waterways and wetlands by following the guidelines outlined in this leaflet

Algal blooms in our waterways and wetlands have been caused by excessive nutrients in the water. A major source of the nutrients is the run-off from near by lawns and gardens.

By following these guidelines you will not only be helping to keep our waterways and wetlands healthy and algae free but could also save yourself time and money.

