



# Sustainable Swaps

## Spring Yard Maintenance & Fertilizers

This year, swap out your yard maintenance routine for one that is healthier for your lawn and your community. Here we focus on the impact of fertilizers and ways to reduce your usage.

### **Fertilizer: Friend or Foe?**

Fertilizer has transformed our planet and agriculture to help billions of people have enough food to survive. That's amazing news. However, fertilizer can also have major negative environmental impacts. When it rains, excess fertilizer runs into storm drains and into community streams and rivers. These chemicals pollute our waterways. Fertilizer feeds algae which bloom, stealing oxygen that fish and other aquatic animals need to survive. Let's see how to reduce our impact.

### **How to naturally reduce your fertilizer usage**

- **Don't Mow Too Low** Mow high (3 - 4 in) and mow regularly. Taller grass is healthier and its shade is inhospitable to weeds. Mowing a lawn too short exposes surface roots and dries out the soil faster. Try to cut no more than 1/3 of the lawn height at a time.
- **Use a Mulching Mower** It leaves behind grass clippings which act as a natural fertilizer.
- **Consider Native Plant Landscaping** Reduces the size of your lawn while providing habitats for beneficial birds and butterflies.
- **Follow the Label** Don't use more fertilizer than needed. The excess is lost as run-off.

Even after following these tips, you may feel like you still need some fertilizer. If you do, minimize it and use organic when possible.

1. Use your **compost** first
2. Get your **soil tested** so you use the right amount & type of fertilizer
3. Use **organic fertilizer** (but still minimize!). It releases more slowly vs. synthetic and feeds soil organisms that help your soil structure and lawn health over time.

We'd love your feedback on these swaps, your sustainable swap ideas, and more on what you want to hear about for future editions. Email us at [EAC@Thornbury.org](mailto:EAC@Thornbury.org).