



## TEN SIMPLE STEPS TOWARD A SAFE & HEALTHY LAWN

**Join the movement to minimize reliance on weed and insect controls and take a healthier approach to lawn care to ensure the safety of our watershed.**

### ❶ Test your soil first

Do a soil test to determine whether or not any supplements (potassium, phosphorus, etc.) are needed. Free soil test kits are available at the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. For more information call: 800.287.1535.

### ❷ Avoid the use of phosphorus

Avoid the use of phosphorus unless indicated by the soil test, or when establishing new lawn from seed. Lawns rarely need anything more than nitrogen, if that.

### ❸ Do not fertilize when it's rainy

Check the weather conditions before applying any fertilizer or pesticide and do not fertilize or apply pesticides if rain is predicted (or if the ground is saturated). If you must fertilize, use only fertilizer products that contain slow or time release nitrogen. Water in lightly - no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch.

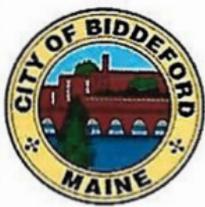
### ❹ Fertilize in the Fall not the Spring

If fertilizer is applied, it is best done between late August and Columbus Day. In the Spring you can rake, de-thatch or aerate your lawn to help stimulate healthy growth and then overseed with a tall or fine fescue mix.

### ❺ Let your lawn grow

Mow your lawn when it reaches 3" or more and leave the clippings on the lawn (nitrogen rich free fertilizer). Cutting higher reduces weed invasion. Avoid mowing off more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of grass height to reduce the stress induced by mowing.





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For more information and to take the Biddeford YardSmart pledge visit: [www.biddefordmaine.org/conservation](http://www.biddefordmaine.org/conservation)

### ⑥ Create a buffer zone

Leave at least a 25' buffer zone of untreated grass or other vegetation around any wells, wetlands, streams, coastal areas or other water bodies to help keep pollutants out.

### ⑦ Know the size of your lawn

Over-application of any fertilizer or pesticide, even organic products, can have a negative effect on lawn health and the watershed, causing algae blooms that deplete oxygen and suffocate marine life. Strictly follow package directions and do not exceed the maximum amount to be applied. Never leave fertilizer, weed or insect controls on asphalt, concrete or other impervious surfaces. Sweep them back into the lawn or dispose of them according to the product's directions on the label.

### ⑧ Water wisely and infrequently

If absolutely necessary, deeply soak the lawn once or twice a week with about 1" of water. Deep watering encourages strong root growth, while frequent light watering increases the potential for harmful pesticide or fertilizer runoff.

### ⑨ Plant right for your site

To minimize weeds, regularly overseed your lawn with fine or tall fescues, white clover and other grasses appropriate for this climate. Maximum density minimizes weeds.

### ⑩ Control weeds and pests

Don't broadcast pesticides. Weed by hand and if you need to manage pest problems with pesticides use it only in the spot needed. Mulching once a year reduces weeds in beds.

