

Hidden Harbour Lake Association News letter – December 2015

Hidden Harbour Lake Needs Your Help In Controlling Weeds

Fertilizer runoff from lawns is the primary source of nutrients associated with aquatic plant problems in our lake. Our past efforts of weed control have consisted of a combination of biological and herbicide treatments costing \$35,000 since 2009. Herbicide treatments, even when performed by licensed professionals, pose some risk of affecting the balance of the lake. Unfortunately, if the level of fertilizer nutrients remains unchanged, these weed control methods are temporary at best.

Various university extensions have reviewed the role lawn fertilizers play in aquatic weed problems and offer recommendations on fertilizer application practices to reduce the problem. These recommendations were echoed by Dr. Hans Gottgens from U of T at a past Lake forum. If we follow these recommendations, we will reduce the amount of nitrogen leaching into the lake and reduce the cost and need for herbicidal treatments.

How You Can Help

Our objective is to reduce the amount of nitrogen leaching into the lake while maintaining aesthetic and healthy lawns. Here are some ideas to help better manage the use of fertilizers:

1. **Lawn Services** - Competition pressures lawn services to fertilize aggressively ...beyond what our lawns require. Give firm standing instructions to your service to spread fertilizer at a lower rate and/or frequency. Herbicides and pesticides can be continued at usual rate. You can always adjust the fertilizer application if needed. Advise the service company that you expect to see the instructions reflected on the service slip they leave after each visit. It is possible the instructions will be overlooked by the workers applying the fertilizer.
2. **Do it yourself** – If you are doing your own lawn treatment, here are some good practices to follow:
 - Choose the right product
 - Slow- release nitrogen formulations are preferable to soluble, fast- release formulations.
 - Avoid using combination products that include both fertilizer and weed killers.
 - Good application practices
 - Do not apply fertilizer before spring green-up and apply no later than October 15th. Avoid mid- summer fertilizing.
 - Target a maximum of 2 lbs. N/ 1000 ft²/ year on an established lawn. Apply 1/2 to 1/3 (or less) of that recommended on the fertilizer bag label and then monitor lawn response. Reapply at the reduced rate only when lawn response starts to fall below acceptability.
 - Leave a buffer zone between your lawn and the shoreline. A minimum of 25 ft is recommended
 - Don't overwater, especially after fertilizing.
 - Avoid getting fertilizer into natural drainage areas or pathways on a property. These areas can carry fertilizer into the lake before having they have a chance to absorb into the soil

Please support this effort to protect Hidden Harbour's greatest asset. Thank you.

Please contact Siotkowski@sbcglobal.net with questions.