

## What You Can do to Help Oyster Pond



### Limit the amount of storm water runoff from your property

Storm water runoff is a major pollutant to Oyster Pond. Storm water coming off roof tops, driveways, gardens and streets picks up a variety of contaminants. It is a nasty brew of salt, automotive chemicals, metals, grease, garden chemicals, animal waste, dust and dirt that flows unimpeded into the Pond. Contaminants harm fish and other aquatic life and increase nutrient levels. Sediments carried in storm runoff can smother aquatic life, clog fish gills, and cut off the light needed by underwater plants. If each property owner limited storm water runoff from their property this would limit the amount of this toxic brew entering our Pond.

**How:** Divert rain gutters from paved surfaces to grass or other vegetated areas. Replace impervious surfaces such as concrete with brick or paving stones that allow precipitation to run between pavers. Reduce the amount of lawn and replace with trees and other vegetation that absorb more precipitation. Install gravel trenches along your driveway to collect runoff or consider installing a rain garden to collect runoff from your site. Replace asphalt driveways with Cape Cod friendly clamshells. For more information:

<http://www.capecodgroundwater.org/raingardens.html>



### Dispose of Toxic Chemicals at the Household Hazardous Products Collections

Do not dump toxic chemicals in the ground, ditch or storm drain. They can flow directly into the Pond or the Sound. Never dump toxic chemicals down your drain as they can damage your septic system and migrate through

the groundwater to Oyster Pond. Read the labels of your household products, even some common household cleaners contain harmful ingredients such as dichlorobenzene (mold or mildew control products) or petroleum distillates (furniture polish, paint thinners). If you live in a flood zone keep all toxic hazardous materials in secure cabinets above potential flood waters to prevent contaminants washing into Oyster Pond during storm events.

**How:** Household Hazardous Product Collections are held four times a year at each of the Upper Cape Towns. Remaining collection dates for this year are August 15 from 9am to 1pm at the Mashpee High School and October 17th 9am to 1pm at the Peebles Elementary School in Bourne. Call 800-319-2783 for questions. Consider switching to eco friendly products instead of using toxic chemicals.

<http://www.ecocycle.org/hazwaste/recipes.cfm>



**Recycle Used Motor Oil** - Never ever, dump used oil into the ground or storm drains. According to the EPA, used motor oil is the single largest source of water pollution to lakes, streams and rivers. The oil from one engine can produce an eight acre oil slick. Another problem is the oil from motor engines that drip on driveways and streets. Precipitation washes this oil debris down streets into the Pond. Used motor oil is not accepted at the Hazardous Product Collections.

**How:** Used motor oil is accepted at the Town "dump" on Thomas Landers Rd. The oil tank is across from the trailer at the entrance. Check with the gatekeeper before disposing. No dump sticker is required nor is there a fee. Use drip pans or a ground cloth to catch drips from motor engines.



### Regularly pump out your septic system

All septic systems must be pumped every 3 to 5 years to remove the sludge and floating scum to prevent the system from failing. Avoid flushing chemicals and bleach products into your system as they can kill the bacteria that is an important component of a healthy septic system. Don't install or use a garbage disposal as the solids and grease stress the

bacteria and shorten the life of the system.

**How:** Compost what organic waste you can and dispose of grease in the regular trash. Set up a regular pump out timetable with your septic system hauler.



### Maintain a vegetated buffer along the Pond's shoreline.

Keeping buffers along the shoreline is one of the most important things we can do to maintain a healthy ecosystem around the Pond. These buffers serve many important functions by intercepting fertilizer and pesticide runoff, stabilizing soils, preventing shoreline erosion and providing habitat to birds, amphibians and animals in the important zone between land and water. Trees and shrubs provide cooling shade along the shoreline for fish and other aquatic dwellers. Woody debris from fallen limbs provide important habitat. Lawns down to the water's edge are not good for the Pond.

**How:** Let natural vegetation grow along the shoreline. If your area was cleared, consider planting native plants to replace the lost natural buffer. The Falmouth Conservation Commission has a new list of native plants that do well in our climate. Remember to contact the Con Com prior to any work along the banks and shoreline and within 100 feet of the edge of the Pond, even vista pruning.



### **Avoid the use of pesticides on your lawn and in your garden**

Pesticides can run off our gardens and lawns during rainstorms and enter Oyster Pond. The toxins in pesticides contain ingredients that are harmful to fish, birds and wildlife. Many chemicals are especially harmful to fish and other aquatic dwellers. Consider for example, the “weed and feed” lawn chemicals applied to lawns in the spring. Most contain the toxic pesticide 2,4-D that can be acutely toxic to fish depending on the formula. Studies also found it bio accumulates in some fish and is highly toxic to benthic animals.

**How:** Many garden centers now have environmentally friendly alternatives. For a “green” weed and feed lawn product consider using corn gluten, it suppresses seed formation while fertilizing your lawn. It is available from several different manufactures. Spread in early spring, about when the forsythia bloom.



### **Do not flush pharmaceuticals down your toilet!**

For many years the public was told to dispose of expired pharmaceuticals down the toilet. Now, according to studies by the Silent Spring Institute (speakers at OPET’s annual meeting), these drugs and other personal care products enter the groundwater via our septic systems and migrate to our ponds and estuaries. Oyster Pond was one of the study sites and contains higher levels of these pollutants than less populated watersheds on Cape Cod. Other studies found residues of pharmaceuticals in fish, including medicines used to treat high cholesterol, allergies, high blood pressure, bipolar disorder and depression. Very low levels of these chemicals are found to cause the feminization of fish and other reproductive problems.

**How:** Remove unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs from their original containers and throw into the trash. If you are concerned about accidental poisoning or drug abuse, mix them with coffee grounds or other undesirable products and seal in a nondescript impermeable container before tossing into the garbage.



### **Recycle lawn clippings and leaves .**

Leave lawn clippings on the lawn to break down and renourish your lawn. Clippings are a free and easy source of nitrogen for your lawn. Contrary to old folk tales, clippings do not cause thatch. Thatch is caused by excessive use of fertilizer. Do not dispose of lawn clippings or leaves in the Pond or in wetlands. It is **illegal** to dump any thing in a wetland area.

**How:** Compost leaves and clippings (if you still think you must take them off the lawn) at your property or take them to the Town’s compost facility where they are accepted for FREE. The facility is on Blacksmith Shop Road (upper Gifford St.) and open Tuesday – Sat 8:15am to 3:30pm. You can also take away free compost. *Wendi Buessler*

### **How to Grow a Falmouth & Oyster Pond Friendly Lawn**

*A major way to contribute to the health of Oyster Pond is to follow the guidelines for a Falmouth Friendly Lawn developed by FACES (Falmouth Associations Concerned with Estuaries and Salt Ponds). OPET is a member of FACES. Excess nitrogen from lawn fertilizers is a major contributor to elevated nutrient levels in Falmouth’s ponds and estuaries. Traditionally, Cape Cod and Falmouth lawns were never fertilized and were allowed to dry out and go dormant during the hot, summer months. These lawns endured for generations without any fertilizer or watering. Follow these steps for a healthier and pond friendlier lawn.*

**1. Test Your Soil:** When pH is below 6.5, add lime so grass can effectively use nutrients. The Cape Cod Extension Office tests soil samples (508-375-6690).

**2. Enrich Your Soil:** Good soil is the key to healthy, vibrant grass. Grass grows best when there is at least 6” of topsoil. Few homes in Falmouth have such soil. To supplement yours spread a ¼” of topsoil or well screened compost to your lawn in the fall. An excellent source of compost is from Watts Family Farms in Mashpee 508- 477-3302. You can also enrich soils by using low-dosage, controlled release organic fertilizers that contain organisms to promote soil conditioning with soil-improving microbes that promote healthy biological activity. When your soil is healthy and your lawn is healthy common lawn care problems such as weeds, disease and drought become much less of an issue.

**3. Minimize Fertilizer:** Traditional Cape lawns don’t need much, if any, fertilizer. If you fertilize, use only 1 lb of Nitrogen per 1000 square foot of grass per year. Use organic slow-release nitrogen fertilizer. Only fertilize when the grass is growing vigorously, in the fall and spring. Don’t fertilize in the summer when the grass is dormant or growing slowly, you are wasting money and feeding the weeds.

**4. Avoid Using Pesticides:** Pesticides stress turf grass. When pesticides are used, fertilizer is also applied to help grass recover. As a result, much more fertilizer is used than the grass needs and the excess nitrogen can runoff to pollute Oyster Pond.

**5. Mow High, Recycle Clippings:** Mow grass to a height of about 3 inches. Leave clippings on your lawn. Leaving turf blades tall retains moisture and crowds out weeds. Resharpen blades to cut rather than tear grass. Clippings contain up to half the nitrogen lawns need.

**6. Use Cape Grasses:** Plant fine/tall fescues not Kentucky bluegrass. Kentucky bluegrass is fine for Kentucky, but not Falmouth. A blend of fine leaved fescues or tall fescues does well on the Cape. These blends require little fertilizer, tolerant some drought and is less susceptible to disease.

**7. Minimize the size of your lawn:** Less lawn = less mowing and work! Substitute lawn areas with native trees, shrubs and flowers. This saves on lawn care, water and fertilizer. *Wendi Buessler*