



BRIAN J. GAVRILOFF, THE JOURNAL, FILE

Algal blooms often thrive in Pigeon Lake, fuelled in part by the nutrients found in sewage, manure and runoff containing chemical fertilizers.

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A water-quality consultant takes water samples from the in-flows, creeks that flow into Pigeon Lake.

More towns ban fertilizer

Get your lawn off drugs; try compost

Gerald Filipski



Alberta and Saskatchewan lead the way when it comes to the number of households using chemical fertilizers on their lawns or gardens. According to Statistics Canada, 45 per cent of households use these fertilizers (2005). The lowest use came from Quebec at 15 per cent. The national average was approximately 32 per cent.

When it came to the highest number of households that watered their lawns, Alberta led the way again at 64 per cent. Prince Edward Island was lowest at 18 per cent and the Canadian average was 54 per cent. These figures are a cause for concern in urban areas, certainly, but even more so when it comes to communities that have lake properties.

Manitoba will be the first province in Canada to restrict homeowner use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus. On Jan. 1, 2009 the province will restrict the use of lawn fertilizers containing more than one per cent phosphorus. The province hopes that the restriction will result in a one-per-cent reduction to the amount of phosphorus that ends up in Lake Winnipeg. Lake Winnipeg has a problem each year with algal blooms that are fed by the phosphorus.

The concerns over the use of lawn fertilizers in lake areas are spurring second homeowners into action. Recently, a friend informed me that the Summer Village of Itaska Beach on Pigeon Lake had made a bold move to ban fertilizer use.

I found it interesting that we may finally be seeing the light when it comes to fertilizer use affecting our lakes and streams. In Itaska Beach, effective Jan. 16, 2008, the council passed a bylaw that bans "all fertilizer use within the Summer Village of Itaska." The council announced that it recognized, "Fertilizers are a possible source of the problem with the water quality at Pigeon Lake." The council is also encouraging other municipalities around the lake to pass similar bylaws.