

YRPC Weekly News

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Phosphorus: The Green Monster in Your Garden

Arnie, we all love a lush, vibrant yard and gardens, but we don't love a lush, vibrant ("weed choked") river or lake. Your yard and gardens can be the envy of the neighborhood, but don't get carried away with "quick fix" chemicals that can harm our lakes, rivers and ground water. A chemical culprit is quietly suffocating the Yellow River. It's time for some cold, hard, and deeply unsettling facts about **Phosphorus**.

The Shocking Truth About Our Water

1. The Undisputed Public Enemy #1

Forget industrial sludge or secret chemical spills. **Phosphorus is the number one pollutant threatening lakes and streams across Wisconsin.** It's not coming from a factory; it comes from our own neighborhoods.

2. The Black-Market Chemical in Your Shed

Phosphorus is so destructive to aquatic ecosystems that it has been legally banned and stripped from standard lawn fertilizers. Yet, it still lurks in plain sight. Common garden fertilizers—like the popular **10-10-10** and **19-19-19** blends—are still legally packed with it. Every time we over-apply them, or apply them near a lake or river, we are priming an environmental time bomb.

3. The Terrifying "1 to 500" Multiplication Formula

In our lakes and rivers, nature provides plenty of nitrogen and carbon. The only thing holding back a massive eco-disaster is a lack of phosphorus. It is the "limiting nutrient"—the master key that unlocks biological chaos. Once it hits the water, the math is horrifying:

1 lb Phosphorus + 7 lbs Nitrogen + 40 lbs Carbon = 500 lbs of Wet Algae

Just *one pound* of runoff can generate **a quarter ton** of wet, suffocating slime.

4. The Lifelong Scar

If you accidentally kill your lawn, you can reseed it and have a vibrant green carpet back in a few months. But if we overload a lake or river with excess phosphorus? **It may not recover within your lifetime, your children's lifetime, or even your grandchildren's.** Once a lake turns, reversing the damage is nearly impossible.

Reality Check: Where Do You Stand?

What are Your Priorities?

- Wisconsin has 15,000 lakes and 86,000 miles of streams and rivers but if you can't see any of them from your house, your yard and garden may be more important than having healthy lakes and rivers.
- The state of Wisconsin is blessed to have some of the best natural resources in the world. You live in Wisconsin because these natural resources are important to you and your family. Protecting them should be a top priority.
- You want it all. A great looking lawn, the best garden in the neighborhood, and healthy lakes, rivers, and ground water.

Great News!

Arnie, you can have a great looking lawn and garden and still protect Wisconsin Lakes, Rivers, and Ground Water. Stay tuned. In next week's article we will share ideas for making your lawn and gardens look great for less money and protect Wisconsin's lakes, rivers and ground water. A real win-win strategy for the neighborhood and the environment.

Upcoming Events

Please visit the [YRPC Website Events Page](#) for full details on the following events:

May 23 – 2026 Annual Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Days – Spooner

Jun 12 – 2026 Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference – Hayward (Must register by June 7th)

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