

## **Changing Homeowner's Lawn Care Behavior to Reduce Nutrient Losses in New England's Urbanizing Watersheds**

The regional Sustainable Landscape Focus Group has received a \$480,000 three year 406 Integrated Research, Education and Extension grant from CSREES National Integrated Water Quality Program for a regional project. This integrated, interdisciplinary, multi-state project applies environmental and behavioral research results to Extension efforts to reduce the application of excess nutrients by homeowners in targeted, urbanizing neighborhoods throughout New England. The ultimate goal of the project is the protection of surface and groundwater quality.

The grant combines two areas of research to direct the extension educational efforts. The environmental research will be used to develop regionally specific recommendations for fertilizer use that minimize water quality impacts and to develop a reliable soil based nitrogen test. The social science research will be conducted in five target communities to identify the primary drivers of homeowners' fertilizer choices and application behaviors by examining the relative strength of various influences including environmental values, attitudes and norms, and the relative influence of different types of informational messages. Focus group members from University of New Hampshire, University of Maine, University of Vermont, University of Rhode Island and University of Connecticut are involved in the grant. Julia Peterson, UNH, is lead PI and is coordinating with the focus group as well as the faculty member from Plymouth State who is partnering with the team with his work focusing on the social marketing component.

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