

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Feel free to call us at the Water District. We've also listed some resources for more information below:

Safe Drinking Water

- For more information about drinking water call the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791 or visit their web page at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/drinklink.htm>. The EPA Office of Groundwater and Drinking Water page is at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/>. Source Water Protection information is available at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/protect.html>.
- The Maine Drinking Water Program can be reached at (207) 287-2070 or visit their web page at <http://janus.state.me.us/dhs/eng/water/>.
- Call the Brunswick & Topsham Water District at 729-9956, or visit our offices at 266 River Road in Topsham.

Lawn & Garden Care

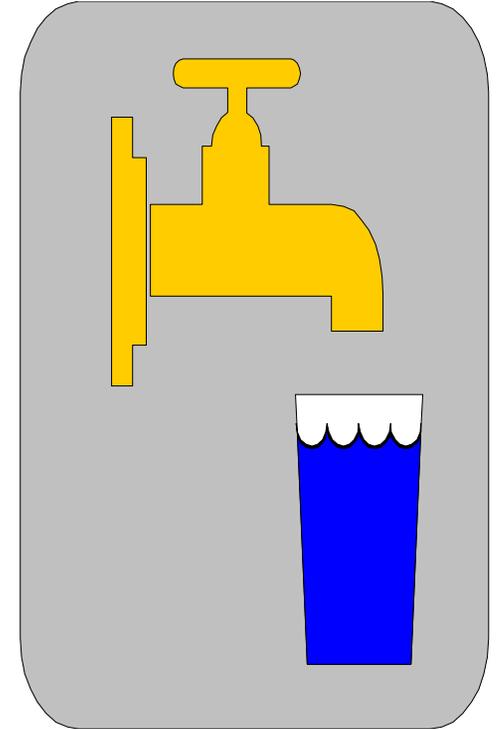
- The University of Maine Cooperative Extension has various brochures and information about safe lawn and garden care. Call them at 1-800-287-1471 or visit their web page at <http://www.umext.maine.edu/>.

Pesticides

- ☒ The Maine Board of Pesticide Control can be reached at 287-2731. Their web page is <http://www.state.me.us/agriculture/pesticides/homepage.htm>.
- ☒ Just in case, the Maine Poison Control Center number is 1-800-442-6305.

Brunswick & Topsham
Water District
PO Box 580
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HELP PROTECT YOUR GROUNDWATER!



An important message from:

**The Brunswick & Topsham
Water District**

THE GROUNDWATER IS OUR DRINKING WATER

The Brunswick & Topsham Water District, and homes that have a well, get their water from groundwater. Groundwater is simply the water that lies beneath the earth's surface. The term "aquifer" refers to the geologic deposits that the water is drawn from.

The problem with groundwater is that we can't see it and aren't always aware of it. But we live on top of our drinking water. If we aren't careful it can easily be contaminated. For example, gasoline or chemicals spilled on the ground or in nearby streams or drainage ditches can seep through the soil and reach the groundwater. Faulty septic systems can allow bacteria and viruses to enter the groundwater system. Because groundwater moves slowly, chemicals like pesticides and fertilizers can accumulate in the groundwater.

Once groundwater is contaminated it is almost impossible to clean. Filtration or other methods of treatment are sometimes possible but are very expensive. Usually the only option after groundwater becomes contaminated is to abandon its use as a water supply.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO PROTECT THE GROUNDWATER?

The Towns of Brunswick and Topsham have adopted aquifer protection zoning ordinances that restrict certain land uses and activities in the "aquifer protection zones". The Brunswick Zoning Ordinance, for example, limits the amount of petroleum products that can be stored to less than 10 gallons. It is not possible, however, to limit all activity. Residential use of fertilizers and pesticides is not prohibited.

WHAT ELSE CAN BE DONE?

This is where you can help. First, be aware that we are living over our drinking water and use care when doing anything that could contaminate the groundwater. In particular, there is a concern that improper and even regular use of pesticides in the aquifer zones could contaminate the water supply. The best way to prevent groundwater contamination is to avoid using pesticides and fertilizers altogether. You can maintain a healthy lawn without chemicals by following a few suggestions:

- 👉 Keep it Clean - rake up leaves, branches and other debris to prevent killing the grass. Don't pile snow on lawn areas – it can damage or kill grass.
- 👉 Mowing - cut grass at a 2 to 2 ½ inch height to shade out weeds. Use a mulching mower to return organic matter to the soil and decrease the need for fertilizers. Mow frequently and keep your lawnmower blade sharp to prevent weakening the grass.
- 👉 Watering - water deeply, 1 to 1 ½ inches (including rainfall), once a week until mid-July or August, and resume watering when the weather cools.
- 👉 Remove Thatch – you can rent a dethatcher or use a thatch rake to remove thatch if it is more than one-half inch thick. Dethatching is best done in late summer or fall when weed seeds are less likely to germinate.
- 👉 Aerate the Soil – you can rent a mechanical aerator to promote healthy root systems and improve the effectiveness of watering. If your lawn is small, you can aerate by hand with a garden fork.
- 👉 Remove Weeds by Hand – avoid the use of costly and dangerous chemicals.

FERTILIZERS AND PESTICIDES

We previously discussed how fertilizers and pesticides could enter the groundwater. Our hope is that you will avoid using them but if you feel you must, please keep these points in mind:

- ❌ The Maine Board of Pesticide Control's motto is, "Think First, Spray Last". Make sure that you have properly identified the problem and are using a product specifically designed to treat that problem.
- ❌ Pesticides are poisons designed to kill plants and insects. Don't assume that they are "safe" to use, even so-called "natural" or "organic" pesticides. Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.
- ❌ Don't buy products that you don't really need. "Weed and Feed" and other combination products are usually overkill. Spot treat infected areas rather than doing "broadcast" spreading. It's generally safer and will save money, too.
- ❌ Don't apply more fertilizer than is necessary; twice as much is not twice as good. Use slow release fertilizers so that more of the fertilizer is used by the plants and less goes into the soil and groundwater.
- ❌ Have your soil tested. You can obtain a soil test kit by calling the University of Maine Cooperative Extension at 1-800-287-1471. Send in a sample and they will send back a recommended fertilizer mix specific to your lawn. They can also help with pest identification and recommended treatment methods.