



# Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation District's Conservation Corner

Highlighting the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District's projects, programs, and events.

February 2012

## District Staff

Elizabeth Mangle  
*District Manager*

Janice Reynolds  
*Clerk/Treasurer*

Lenny Croote  
*Conservation Technician*

Caitlin Stewart  
*Conservation Educator*

Tom Bielli  
*NRCS District Conservationist*



*Working to manage and promote the wise use of natural resources in Hamilton County since 1965*

102 County View Dr.  
PO Box 166

Lake Pleasant, NY 12108

Phone: (518) 548-3991

Fax: (518) 548-5602

E: [hcswd@frontiernet.net](mailto:hcswd@frontiernet.net)

W: [hamiltoncountyswd.com](http://hamiltoncountyswd.com)

facebook

YouTube

## Invader on the Half Shell: Asian Clam

Native to Australia, Asia, and the Mediterranean, the **Asian Clam** was discovered in Washington 1938, and has spread to 40 other states including New York. This tiny mollusk causes big problems for the water bodies it invades, adversely impacting the economy, recreation, and the environment.



### Where is it found in New York State?

Cayuga Lake, Champlain Canal, Chenango River, Lake George, Niagara River, Owasco Lake, Schenevus Creek, Seneca Lake, St. Lawrence River, Susquehanna River.

### What do they look like?

- Dime-sized bivalve.
- Varying color. Outer shell is brown or tan, inner shell is white or purple.
- Elevated growth rings protrude from shell.

### Where do they live?

- Lakes, rivers and streams with gravel, sand, or silt substrate.
- Colonize the sediment surface or burrow below.
- Need high amounts of dissolved oxygen for survival.
- Withstand temperatures ranging from 35 to 86°F.
- Successful populations appear to occur at calcium levels of 6 mg/L and a pH value greater than 6.5.

### How do they spread?

- Boats, trailers, bait buckets, gear
- Water currents
- Aquaculture

### Why are they harmful?

- Rapid reproduction results in densities as large as 5,000 clams per square meter.
- Clog water intake pipes, causing costly repairs to boat motors and water treatment systems.
- Shells biofoul swimming areas, beaches and shoreline property, and are harmful to humans when stepped on.
- Feces promotes algal blooms that degrade water quality.
- Compete with native

species including mollusks and fish for habitat and food.

- Calcium laden shells provide a superb growing surface for invasive Zebra Mussels.

### How can YOU help?

- Check your trailer, watercraft, equipment, and pets and remove hitchhikers.
- Drain water from the livewell, bilge, motor, and bait containers before leaving the boat launch.
- Dry all equipment.
- Do not release live bait into water bodies.
- Monitor your lake for invaders.



*Elevated growth rings*

- Report invasive species to the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Schedule an invasive species talk for your school or organization.

*All photos courtesy of the Lake George Association.*

## Dishwasher Detergent and Nutrient Run-off Law Prevents Pollution adapted from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

The New York State **Dishwasher Detergent and Nutrient Runoff Law** places restrictions on dishwasher detergents and fertilizers that contain phosphorus in an effort to reduce the amount of harmful phosphorus entering our waters.

### Fertilizer Provisions

Beginning January 1, 2012:

- Use of phosphorus fertilizer on lawns or non-agricultural turf is restricted. Application of any fertilizer on lawns or non-agricultural turf is prohibited from December 1 to April 1.
- Application of any fertilizer on lawns or non-agricultural turf within 20 feet of a water body or on paved surfaces is restricted.
- Retailers must display phosphorus fertilizer separately from phosphorus-free fertilizer and must post signs notifying customers of the terms of the law.

### Environmental Impact

- Phosphorus is carried to ponds, rivers, lakes and streams from lawn areas by stormwater runoff.
- Phosphorus in water has been linked to reductions in oxygen necessary for fish to breathe; algae that turn waterbodies green; and algae by-products that degrade drinking water.
- Currently, over 70 waterbodies in New York State are impaired due to phosphorus. "Impaired" means that the use of the waterbody for drinking

water, fisheries or recreation is negatively affected by a pollutant. Even when a waterbody has not been designated as impaired, water quality may be degraded due to phosphorus.

### Economic Cost

- Phosphorus-impaired waters can negatively impact recreation and tourism activity, an important component of many local economies.
- Protecting drinking water from the adverse impacts of phosphorus can be costly.
- Municipalities that are located within watersheds of impaired waters must meet regulatory limits on total phosphorus entering the water from all sources, especially stormwater runoff.
- Storm sewer system retrofits to remove phosphorus from stormwater can cost millions of dollars per system.



### Why Target Lawn Fertilizer?

In the 1970's New York banned phosphorus in most household cleaners including laundry detergents and hand dishwashing liquids. Of the remaining sources, lawn fertilizers contribute significant percentages of phosphorus to the State's waters and are reasonably easy and inexpensive to control.

### Picking the Right Fertilizer

Fertilizer labels show nutrient content in a nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (N-P-K) ratio. Products with a phosphorus percentage higher than 0.67% may only be used if a new lawn is being established or a soil test indicates that it is necessary. Use of products 0.67% or lower is not restricted.

### Who is Impacted?

- Manufacturers of automatic dishwasher detergents
- Manufacturers of lawn fertilizer products
- Retailers and distributors of dishwasher detergents and lawn fertilizers
- Landscapers and lawn care professionals
- Pesticide applicators
- Households
- Consumers
- Anyone managing lawns

For more information, visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/67239.html>