

# *Austin guide to...* *avoiding* **WEED & FEED**

**Atrazine, the weed killer most commonly found in many of the popular weed and feed products, is showing up at more than 70% of our groundwater monitoring sites city-wide and 50% of our surface water sites. This makes the problem more widespread and consistent than previously believed. To help you can:**

## *Avoid Weed and Feed*

(a combined fertilizer + weed killer product):

- **Combined products are usually not a good mix – the best time to treat weeds is NOT usually the best time to fertilize**
- **Spreading weed killer over the entire lawn is usually overkill**
- **Some lawn weed killers can stress and damage turf if applied during warm weather**
- **Using an herbicide over the entire lawn can harm nearby trees**
- **Chemicals can be tracked into the house on shoes or hands**

*Hand-pull or spot-treat weeds instead*



*Look for good options inside*



100% Recycled

## *Fertilize Lawns, Not Creeks*

As Austin grows, so does the use of fertilizers. While nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium) from fertilizers can help our plants grow, they can also cause excessive growth of algae and aquatic weeds when washed into our waterways. Besides being unsightly, these plants can rob the water of oxygen and harm fish and amphibians.

### *Kill Weeds Without Weed And Feed*

#### **Right Preparation:**

- Keep plants healthy so they can outcompete weeds
- Use a weed barrier in landscape plantings to block light and prevent growth

#### **Right Product:**

- Use a weed popper, hoe, or your hand(!) to remove plants when they are small and soil is moist
- Remove weeds regularly before they flower or go to seed
- Look for the Grow Green Weed fact sheet at nurseries or at [www.growgreen.org](http://www.growgreen.org) to help identify your weeds -- many can be “mowed away” or easily hand-pulled
- If you must use an herbicide ... spot-treat with one that is made to treat your particular weed

#### **Right Timing (for chemical treatments):**

- A post-emergent (when weed is visible) herbicide is preferred -- it allows you to treat only where you know there's a problem and where you can correctly identify the weed
- If you must use a pre-emergent (before the weed is visible), only treat an area with persistent weed problems and tough weeds

#### **Right Rate:**

- Always follow the EPA-approved label directions
- Buy ready to use weed killers to reduce spillage and ensure the chemical amount is correct

### *Fertilizing Quick Tips*

#### **Right Products:**

- Organic fertilizer – naturally slow release
- Synthetic fertilizer – slow release is best

#### **Right Rate:**

- Leave grass clippings on the lawn to return most of the needed nutrients to the soil naturally
- Measure your lawn size, not your property size (over-application is probably the greatest threat to water quality)
- Use half as much, half as often as recommended on the bag (**1/2 lb. N/1000 square ft.**, no more than twice a year)

#### **Right Timing:**

- Spring Fertilization: April 15 (after the lawn has been mowed two times)
- Fall Fertilization: Early October (only necessary if lawn looks unhealthy)
- Never fertilize before a rain

#### **Right Method:**

- Water in gently – not to the point of runoff
- Sweep any fertilizer off sidewalks and roads



Tips apply for both do-it-yourselfers and lawn care professionals

*Less is More!*

**Fertilizing just once a year:**

- **Saves time fertilizing**
- **Saves time mowing**
- **Saves water**
- **Saves money**
- **Saves our creeks**



Algae in our creeks is often tied to excess fertilizer



[www.growgreen.org](http://www.growgreen.org)



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