

Climate Action Committee - Newsletter Update – February 2025

Fertilizers and Pesticides

Did you know that 5% of global greenhouse gas emissions come from making nitrogen fertilizer? That producing it uses 1-2% of global energy? Or that as it breaks down, it releases nitrous oxide, another potent greenhouse gas? (See [From Wasteland to Wonder](#) by Basil Camu and [MIT's Climate Portal](#). These are just two reasons to rethink our use of certain fertilizers.

Other reasons include nitrogen running through the sandy and porous Cape soil, into our groundwater. It then makes its way into ponds, streams, bays, and the ocean where it upsets the ecological balance. This causes such things as algal blooms, which can sicken humans and other animals, and excessive plant growth which use up oxygen that fish need to survive. At present, our drinking water is healthy and we want to keep it that way. Our bays and ponds are not very healthy and we need to address this

While too much nitrogen can cause problems, plants do love it. So, what are we gardeners and landscapers to do? There are options other than chemical fertilizers. Look around when you walk through the woods or fields or even along roadsides and notice all that is growing there. The plants thrive on decaying matter—leaves, twigs, dead trees, fungi, insects. Our gardens and yards can do the same. We can also rethink what kinds of yards and gardens we want – something perpetually green and groomed, which doesn't support the local and migrant birds and insects, or a Cape lawn and drought-resistant garden that [help vital pollinators thrive?](#)

In December 2024, Laura Kelley of [Protect Our Cape Cod Aquifer](#) and Littlefield Landscapes, gave a presentation for the Climate Action Committee at Truro Public Library on the importance of and ways to tend to our gardens and yards without chemicals. You can find the video of “Get Your Land Off Drugs” by going to <https://www.youtube.com> and search for Truro Public Library.

Laura Kelley is also working hard to get warrants for Cape towns for people to vote on whether their town should request a Home Rule Petition (HRP) from the State that would limit the use of fertilizers and of pesticides (two separate petitions). If you want to know more about this or want to work with Laura on this endeavor, contact Protect Our Cape Cod Aquifer at the above address. The site also has more information about reasons to, and how to, reduce or eliminate outdoor pesticides and harmful fertilizers.

Just as we need to rethink our use of chemical fertilizers, we also need to stop or limit our use of pesticides. In addition to filtering down into our aquifer, anything we spray on our gardens or lawns is apt to blow onto our neighbors' properties, affecting their land and

animals. In using pesticides to help particular plants grow, we might also be unintentionally killing beneficial insects and vital pollinators.

If you want to learn more about our protecting our bays and ponds and about native plants which are more suited to this area, go to [Association to Preserve Cape Cod](#) and [Cape Cod Native Plants](#).

Georgia Neill

Climate Action Committee Volunteer

If you want to learn more about the Climate Action Committee or become a member or volunteer, contact Chair Lili Flanders at climateaction@truro-ma.gov. Full- or part-timers welcome!