

# Tips to help Protect our Water Supply

SHELTER ISLAND CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

You may have heard recently about the health risks, and lawsuits pertaining to a commonly used herbicide called glyphosate. Glyphosate has been a widely used herbicide since 1974 for killing broad leaf weeds in agriculture and lawn care. Glyphosate is an ingredient in herbicides with common brand names that include, Roundup, Rodeo Aquatic Herbicide, and Eraser.

In March 2015, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified glyphosate as a "**probably carcinogenic in humans**" based on epidemiological studies, animal studies, and lab studies. In 2017, glyphosate was listed by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment as a chemical known to cause cancer.

The link between glyphosate and Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma is also particularly strong. A study published in the *International Journal of Cancer* found an association between exposure to herbicides that include glyphosate and non-Hodgkins lymphoma. Currently the EPA does not list glyphosate as a cancer causing chemical.

So what does that all this mean for Shelter Island?

First of all, we are an island. Our water supply is limited because it is sourced from our shallow, groundwater-fed aquifer. Water soluble materials, including pesticides, entering into the ground can percolate into our groundwater. Long Island, along with other parts of the country, is currently dealing with increased nitrogen levels in our groundwater and surface waters. Nitrogen levels are effected by many sources, including septic systems. High levels of nitrogen in drinking water can pose health hazards to residents, notably thyroid disease, certain forms of cancer, birth defects). Nitrogen is also a plant nutrient that contributes to more frequent and larger algae (harmful) blooms in our local marine waters.

## Septic Systems

For these important reasons, Shelter Island and Long Island residents are encouraged to replace old septic systems with a newer version of the I/A system that converts most of the soluble nitrogen into nitrogen gas that is released into the air. **Can we say something that is a call to action, for example-who to see to get more information on systems, price, and grant funding available (if applicable).**

As Shelter Islanders we all can help to protect our ground water. The use of less toxic products will directly help to improve the quality of our water on Shelter Island. In addition to municipal solution-finding, we need resident support and positive action. We have a shared responsibility for the quality of the water in our sole source aquifer.

The DEC has the following suggestions for a more environmentally friendly lawn.

## Mowing and fertilizers:

- Set mowing height to 3 inches to promote root growth for a healthy grass during dry periods.
- Leave grass clipping on lawn in order for nutrients in blades to be used by grass plants again.
- If you must use fertilizer remember Suffolk County has a law. Fertilizer cannot be used from November 1 to April 1.

Weed removal:

- A lawn with a few weeds, a garden knife or hoe works well for quick removal.
- For more widespread weeds alternatives are herbicidal soap or herb vinegar or a citrus and cloves oil.
- If it is necessary as part of your lawn care program, speak to your lawn care provider about using alternative, eco-friendly herbicides

So let's be proactive Shelter Island and all of us do our part to help protect our Shelter Island's water supply safe for yourself, your family, pets and the future Shelter Islanders.

*DRAFT (05/09/2022) MC*