

New Jersey's new Fertilizer Law

What you should know!

To protect our State's waterways from excess nutrients in stormwater runoff, New Jersey's new **Fertilizer Law** enacted on January 5, 2011, requires that:

- At least 20 percent of nitrogen in lawn fertilizers must be a slow release variety.
- Homeowners may not apply fertilizers within 25 feet of a waterway.
- Residents may not apply lawn fertilizer when rain is falling or predicted.
- Consumers may not apply fertilizer when the ground is frozen and typically cannot absorb nutrients, specifically from Nov. 15 to March 1.
- Professional lawn care providers are restricted from applying fertilizer from Dec. 1 through March 15.
- The use of fertilizers containing phosphorous is restricted to certain limited situations.



Why it's important

The **Fertilizer Law** is really about water quality. It still allows you to feed your lawn, but in a way that reduces adverse impact on New Jersey waters.

Clean water sustains life for all of us. Protection of our water depends on our actions and choices. A great place to begin protecting drinking water is in your own yard.

The rainwater that falls on our lawns and gardens picks up chemicals from fertilizers that we use to beautify our properties. This water flows directly to the nearest stream, often into our drinking water supply.

When nutrients become too abundant in our waterways, "blooms" of algae form and eventually die off and get consumed by bacteria. The bacteria deplete oxygen in the water, robbing it from marine life that needs oxygen to survive.



Lawn care tips to reduce the need for fertilizer

Educate yourself about ways to reduce the need for fertilizers as well as pesticides and frequent watering. Here are some tips:

- Monitor your lawn and identify any potential problems as they develop. Treat only the problems that exist and use natural and mechanical controls first.
- Convert part of your lawn to natural landscaping in order to reduce chemical use and save water and your own labor. Using native plants, ground cover, pathways, etc., instead of turf, enhances the beauty and diversity of your landscape.
- Mulch flower, vegetable, tree and shrub beds to help them retain moisture and improve soil quality and keep plants healthy.
- When planting new turf or reseeding existing lawns, consider drought-tolerant species of grass such as ryes, bentgrass and fescues and allow your lawn to turn brown in the summer. Fall rains will revive the lush green.
- Use a mulching mower that deposits grass clippings on the lawn after mowing to release valuable nutrients back to the soil. Set the more at 3 to 4 inches and mow as needed, never cutting off more than one third of leaf blade at a time.
- Aerate the soil before seeding to prevent weeds and reduce soil compaction.
- Test the soil's pH each year and add lime as needed.

Resources

New Jersey Environmental Center: www.njenvironment.org
Rutgers Cooperative Extension: www.rce.rutgers.edu
NRCS Tips for Home & Garden care:
www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/highlights/homegarden/lawn.html
NRCS Backyard Fact Sheets:
www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard
Pesticide Action Network: www.panna.org
Beyond Pesticides: www.beyondpesticides.org

Books:

Common Sense Pest Control by W. Olkowski, S. Daar and H. Olkowski, 1991
Handbook of Successful Ecological Lawn Care by Paul Sachs, 1996
Tiny Game Hunting by Hilary Klein and Adrian Wenner, 2001
Redesigning the American Lawn by F. Bormann, D. Balmori and G. Geballe, 2001

Products:

Lawn-A-Live, Ridgewood, NJ:
1-800-443-5296
Organic Gardening supplies: www.gardensalive.com
Gardener's Supply Company: www.gardeners.com
Indoor/Outdoor earth friendly gardening supplies: www.wormsway.com