




Decide to use

Florida-friendly lawn and garden practices today



and you can make a difference in your community. Fertilizers applied improperly can run off lawns into local springs, streams, lakes, rivers and, ultimately, into the gulf or ocean. The results can harm our waterways, and even the plants and animals that depend on our sparkling water for survival. Proper fertilizer application, however, can create a dense lawn that acts as a sponge to absorb nutrients from runoff.

Join the community effort to keep all our waters clean. It's easy. Here's how:

-  Use fertilizers appropriately to reduce nutrient levels. More is not necessarily better. Read and follow all instructions. Excess fertilizer that washes off lawns instead of being used by the grass can be a source of stormwater pollution.
-  Do not fertilize when storm events are forecast. This will reduce the level of nutrients washing into our water systems. Fertilizer down the drain means money down the drain as well.
-  Select slow-release fertilizers. They are kinder to the environment and they are usually more cost-effective. Nitrogen from slow-release sources is more likely to be used by plants and less likely to leach out or wash away in stormwater runoff.

Your efforts will help reduce groundwater nutrient levels now and for the future. At the same time, you will be doing your part to preserve the springs, lakes, rivers, bays and wildlife — the things that brought you to Florida's west-central coast.

For a copy of the booklet *What You Need to Know About Fertilizing and Watering Your Lawn and Landscape to Protect Florida's Springs* or other free educational materials about Florida's water resources, visit our online order form at WaterMatters.org or call 1-800-423-1476 (FL only) or (352) 796-7211, ext. 4757.

For information on Florida-friendly landscaping or the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods program, call your county's Extension office or visit FloridaYards.org on the Internet.

Fertilizer Facts extracted primarily from *The Florida Yardstick Workbook* produced by the University of Florida, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Fertilizer Facts



Food for plants comes from the sugars the plants make through photosynthesis. Fertilizer nutrients are used in this process, but a lawn or plant growing poorly because of too much shade, disease or pests will not grow better if fertilized.



Buy fertilizers formulated for the plants you want to fertilize (flowers, turf, palm, etc.). Fertilizers generally cannot fix problems caused by incorrect soil acidity (pH), so first conduct a pH test to make sure it is in the proper range for the plants. Soil pH kits are available in most stores that sell lawn and garden supplies. Some fertilizers may contain too much or too little of a nutrient your plant needs, so check the package information closely.



When fertilizer nutrients are in “slow-release” forms, they are available to plants for a longer time and fewer nutrients are wasted or lost to the environment. Look for these terms on the product label or fertilizer bag:



Time-released, slow-release or controlled-release



Water-insoluble nitrogen, biosolids, activated sludge, sulfur-coated urea (SCU), isobutylidene diurea (IBDU), ureaform (UF), nitroform, polymer-, plastic- or resin-coated urea



15-0-15 or 15-2-15, which indicates the contents are no more than 2% phosphorus



Select the setting on your fertilizer spreader according to fertilizer package directions. If the package does not list a setting for your spreader, contact the fertilizer manufacturer or select another product.



During the rainy season from June through August, avoid the use of water-soluble/quick-release nitrogen, such as ammonium nitrate, urea ammonium phosphate or potassium chloride. There is more potential for rain to wash it quickly past the root zone. If fertilizer is needed, use only 100% slow-release nitrogen products, biosolids and sludge- or organic-based fertilizers.

Southwest Florida
Water Management District



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This information will be made available in accessible formats upon request. Please contact the Communications Department at (352) 796-7211 or 1-800-423-1476 (FL only), ext. 4757; TDD only at 1-800-231-6103 (FL only).