

The Villages



WATER WISDOM

SMART MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES IN FLORIDA'S FRIENDLIEST HOMETOWN

Proper Fertilizer Application

Everyone likes the look of a green lawn, but did you know that a healthy lawn depends on proper fertilizer application. Applying the correct amount of fertilizer at the appropriate time of the year has a significant impact on the growth, appearance, and overall health of your lawn. Misapplication, or over application, not only affects the look of your lawn, but it also can have an effect on the environment. If you apply too much fertilizer it can result in leaching of fertilizer through the soil into the groundwater supply, or fertilizer runoff may get into surface water. On the other hand, too little fertilizer can result in a shallow root system, which can result in weak turf and allow for leaching or runoff to occur more easily. You can help prevent these occurrences by proper application. The first thing you should know is what the numbers on the fertilizer label mean. A bag of fertilizer will have a series of numbers like 10 - 2 - 12. These numbers are called the "Guaranteed Analysis" section of the label, and they represent the percentage by weight of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K). For a "10-2-12" fertilizer, 10% of the bag is nitrogen, 2% is phosphorus, and 12% is potassium. Talk to your supplier for the recommended mix for your lawn.

Also, please keep in mind that different lawn species and different locations require different application rates. To get a general idea of your lawns' needs please visit <http://yourfloridalawn.ifas.ufl.edu> and click on Fertilization.

It is also important to remember some simple things we can do to protect our environment when we fertilize.

- If fertilizer is left on the sidewalk or pavement, even if it is just a small amount, sweep it up as thoroughly as possible and put it back in the bag. Any fertilizer left on paved surfaces will eventually find its way into a storm drain and into the nearest water body.
- "Water-in" your fertilizer after application with about inch of water. To determine how much this is, place tuna cans around your irrigation system and time how long it takes to fill them to this depth. This will put the nutrients at root level, where they can be used up most efficiently.
- Try not to fertilize before heavy rainfall. Too much water after fertilization can cause fertilizer runoff into surface waters.
- If you are fertilizing near any bodies of water, leave an unfertilized strip of approximately ten to twenty feet between the fertilized area and the water body. Be sure that the strip is large enough so that no fertilizer gets into the water body.