

Growing Green and Staying Green!

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Fertilizing our lawns is a very common practice. When it is applied appropriately it can help maintain a beautiful landscape. When it is applied inappropriately it can severely damage our environment, our drinking water and eventually our oceans by accelerating the growth of algae and other aquatic plants. In Florida, fertilizer has become one of the leading polluting materials in our water. Just by following some simple guidelines we can protect the health of our lakes and drinking water.

When purchasing fertilizer try to choose one with the phosphorus level at zero. You can find this number by looking at a set of three numbers on the bag. Follow directions on the bag, don't just dump all of it on your yard. The best way to apply it is to apply small amounts at various times during the year than a lot of fertilizer in one or two applications. This will also decrease the amount of irrigation the landscape will need and produce slow, steady growth instead of a large, quick growth spurt that can stress plants and attract harmful insects. To reduce leaching of the newly applied fertilizer, do not apply when rain is forecast and only irrigate with $\frac{1}{4}$ " of water to wash the fertilizer off the leaf blades and ensure that the nutrients stay within the root zone. If fertilizer is accidentally spilled be sure to sweep it up so that it won't be carried to our lakes by rain or irrigation and always remember to create a 10' buffer zone between the application area and any water body.

We would also like to inform you that Orange County has a "No fertilizer" blackout period ordinance that runs June 1st through September 30, which is our rainy season. The best time to apply fertilizer is when plants are actively growing so a light application before June 1 would do the trick for landscape ornamental plants and turf. Remember, we want our landscapes green but not our lakes.