

## Fertilizing Lawns



Without fertilizer most turfgrasses will struggle to maintain vigor and color. Fertilizing increases growth, color, vigor, hardiness, thickens the grass and is the mainstay of having a rich dark lawn. While fertilizing alone will not provide a perfect lawn, it is one of the 5 most important parts of lawn care.

Fertilizer has three main elements. Nitrogen, (the first number) phosphate, (the middle number) and potash (the last

number). Each element has a particular purpose as to what it does to a grass plant. Let's be simple here and just say that your lawn needs all of the above, but in different amounts. Nitrogen is the most used of the elements. It produces fast growth, dark color and helps thicken the grass. But a fertilizer that is high in Nitrogen and low in Phosphate and Potash will create too much top growth and not enough root growth or energy storage for recovery and over wintering. A balanced fertilizing program for your lawn will include all three main elements with some of the micro-nutrients also needed by grass. Micro-nutrients are minerals like iron, manganese, zinc, boron, sulfur and others. These are not used as much as the three main elements but are needed some. Some of the micronutrients are readily available in the soil you have, others have to be added. To be certain what is needed a soil test is the place to start. After receiving the results of your soil test apply the recommended amounts of fertilizer in the quantity suggested. It is important that you do not over apply. This only stimulates top growth and has potential to harm the grass and cause runoff problems in surrounding lakes and streams. Without a soil test the basic idea of fertilizing is to apply one pound of each nutrient per K ft. of lawn area. Going back to the numbers on a bag of fertilizer, say 15-15-15, this means that each bag contains 15% of each nutrient, so 100#s of this fertilizer would have 15# of nitrogen, phosphate and potash. So if you were putting down one pound of nutrient per K ft. 100# would cover 15 thousand square feet of lawn area with the correct amount of fertilizer. Again, measure the lawn area of your property to know exactly how much grass you have. Don't assume that because you bought a one acre lot and built a house on it that you have one acre of grass. You will subtract the space for the house, the driveway, any landscape beds, any unimproved areas of the property that are not lawn areas, and by the time your done subtracting area you will arrive at a smaller area than you thought. Applying too much fertilizer is dangerous, and costs you needlessly. Our basic program, each property we treat will get a specific tailored program for it's particular needs, will start with an application of 1 pound of N - P - K per thousand square feet followed by two applications that year of nitrogen only with a fall application of a high Potash formula some call a winterizer. This program is just a basic place to start and isn't the best plan for every lawn. Warm season grasses will require more fertilizer than the cool season grasses. Bermuda will need 1 pound of nitrogen per month of growing season to spread rapidly and keep a deep dark color. This will mean two or three more applications

than Fescue depending on where you live and how long your growing season is. Also the level of maintenance you want to give your lawn will determine your fertilizing schedule. Some people will only fertilize in the fall, some fall and spring, and others follow a strict 4 or 6 application schedule for each year. The time to start fertilizing is 30 days prior to the start of the growing season where you live. In our area that is middle of Feb. to Mar. farther north might wait a month. A four application program will be spread out approximately 60 days apart through the growing season