

# RESPONSIBLE LAWN OWNERSHIP

Fertilizer runoff is one of the greatest threats to Boone County waterways. Too much nitrogen in the fertilizer can create algal blooms that take over waterways and kill everything else that lives there.

To prevent this, do NOT fertilize within 15 feet of water bodies and leave an unfertilized buffer strip on lawn adjacent to bodies of water.

In addition, do not fertilize when it's raining, freezing, and use no more than what you need.



## Consider Shrinking your Lawn!

Shrinking your lawn means replacing some part of your lawn with a different kind of greenery. This could be a vegetable garden, native plants, a pollinator plot or xeriscaping.

### Benefits of Shrinking your Lawn:

- Reduced water consumption
- Enhanced biodiversity
- Increased property values
- Less labor intensive
- Less costly over the long term



## Soil Testing Information

We offer soil testing at the SWCD for \$25 a sample. All you have to do is bring it in and in two weeks we will provide the results with recommendations on what to do going forward.

### Sample Directions:

- Use clean tools to dig 10 random holes 4 inches deep
- Make sure these holes are representative of the area you want tested
- Cut a thin slice of soil from the top of the ground to the bottom of each hole and place in a clean bucket. Mix all of this together.
- Try to avoid getting plant matter in the sample.
- Place the mixed soil in a clean Ziploc bag.

## Contact Us

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# GREEN LAWNS, CLEAN WATER

*The Boone County SWCD 's  
Guide to Conscientious  
Lawn Care*



# NUTRIENTS

There are three main nutrients that lawns need. These are Nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), and Potassium (K).

## Nitrogen (N):

This is important for lawn growth as it promotes dark green color and leaf growth. Soil testing for Nitrogen is not recommended as it is impossible to tell how much needs to be applied from a soil test. Instead you should vary the amount you apply based on your level of satisfaction and the amount of time you'd like to spend mowing and watering your lawn.

- **Optimal Yard:** apply 1 lb of Nitrogen per 1000 ft<sup>2</sup> in September
- **Optional:** In addition, apply 1-1.25 lbs of easily available Nitrogen late October to early November and 1 lb of slowly available N in the second half of May
- **Remember!** Increasing fertilizer applications is not a substitute for properly caring for your lawn

## Phosphorous (P):

This is important for root development when new turf is being established. In Illinois P deficiency is rare unless the soil has a high pH (>7.5).

If you are worried about P deficiency, get a soil test. Usually a maximum of 1 lb of P205 per 1000 ft<sup>2</sup> is enough to correct P deficiency

## Potassium (K):

This is important for healthy lawn development and to improve water stress and disease resistance. Most soils in Illinois have sufficient K, and about 2 lb of K2O per 1000 ft<sup>2</sup> will correct deficiency. Sandy soils sometimes do not retain K, so smaller and more frequent applications are better. If you suspect deficiency, a soil test is recommended.

## Fertilizer may not always help...

There are lots of reasons a lawn could be unhealthy, and fertilizer can't fix them all. These include

- Compaction
- Thatch buildup
- Too much or too little water
- Removal of clippings can reduce

## pH:

Some lawns need pH adjustment to improve growth and increase nutrient availability if it is too high or too low. The ideal pH is between 6.0 and 7.5. Most Illinois soils do not need pH adjustments. If the pH is too low, lime with no more than 100 lb agricultural lime per 1000 ft<sup>2</sup> can be applied. Soil pH should be retested every 3 years to check change in pH.

## Other Nutrients:

Calcium, magnesium, sulfur, iron, zinc, and copper are just a few other nutrients needed for lawn growth. These are typically in sufficient supply in Illinois, but if you suspect deficiencies a soil test is recommended.

## Fertilizing Tips!

- Leave grass clippings on the lawn to recycle nutrients
- Mow no shorter than 3" for maximum root growth
- Do not fertilize if chance of rain
- Store fertilizer in a safe, dry place

# PURCHASING FERTILIZER

## Reading the Bag

The numbers on the bag tell you about the nutrients inside. The first number (16 on this bag), represents the percentage of the weight that is nitrogen. On this bag 16% of the weight is nitrogen. The next number represents the percentage of weight that is available phosphorous (8 here), and the last represents the percentage of weight that is potassium (also 8 percent).



## How to calculate the amount of fertilizer needed:

Lets say you have 3000 square feet to fertilize. (30 feet wide and 100 feet long so 30x100)

Take desired N rate divided by the N # on the fertilizer and multiply that by 100.

For example, if you wanted 1 lb per 1000 feet with the fertilizer shown above it would be  $(1/16) \times 100 = 6.25$  lbs of N per 1000 feet.

Since we have 3000 feet we will multiply the 6.25 by three to get 18.75 pounds of fertilizer.

## Where to Buy Fertilizer

Most hardware and home improvement stores will stock fertilizer in their garden section. You can also look at landscaping supply stores. Even Wal-mart stocks some fertilizer in their garden section.

You can also find seeds, spreaders, and other tools you might need for lawncare here.

