

## Choose Your Lawn Maintenance Program!

Choosing a **low maintenance** program for your lawn is generally the most environmentally favorable way to fertilize and is the program Suffolk County recommends. A *low maintenance lawn* can have a low impact to groundwater and surface waters while a *high maintenance lawn* has a higher potential impact on groundwater and surface waters.

**Low maintenance lawns** are usually not irrigated, do not receive pesticide applications, and are mowed infrequently. If you choose to fertilize, 1lb. or less of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. per year is sufficient. Lawns may become dormant if it does not rain or if not irrigated in the summer. Consider no- or low-maintenance native landscaping.

**High maintenance lawns** are often irrigated, are mowed regularly, and may require pesticide applications. These lawns usually require more nitrogen fertilizers. If you choose a high maintenance program for your lawn, you should apply no more than 2-3 lbs. of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. per year. A *high maintenance lawn* not only increases the potential for polluting groundwater and surface waters, but is more expensive for a homeowner to maintain.

Regardless of what maintenance program you choose, it is imperative to the health of our drinking water supply to apply turf fertilizers at the right time and to apply fertilizer correctly. Organic fertilizers can be used on both low and high maintenance lawns.

## For more information:

**About Best Management Practices for Long Island Lawns:** Contact Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County: 423 Griffing Avenue, Riverhead, NY, 11901. The Horticulture Information Lines can be reached at 631.727.4126 and 631.581.4223.

**About lawn care:** Visit Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County's website [www.ccesuffolk.org](http://www.ccesuffolk.org)

**About watering lawns:** [www.nrcc.cornell.edu/grass/moisture/moisture.html](http://www.nrcc.cornell.edu/grass/moisture/moisture.html)

**About lawns:** Visit Cornell University's website [www.gardening.cornell.edu/lawn/index.html](http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/lawn/index.html)

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As part of LL 41-2007, all Home Improvement Contractors licensed by Suffolk County who apply fertilizer to turfgrass, must take a Suffolk County approved turf management course.

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<http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/departments/economicdevelopmentandplanning/waterqualityimprovement/fertilizerreductioninitiative.aspx>

**About the law:** Visit Suffolk County's website: <http://legis.suffolkcountyny.gov/resos2007/i2117-07.htm>

To visit the Healthy Lawns Clean Water website go to <http://suffolkcountyny.gov/healthylawns>



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# Healthy Lawns



# Clean Water

## How we can have both

To visit the Healthy Lawns Clean Water website go to <http://suffolkcountyny.gov/healthylawns>

To protect our water, reduce fertilizer use, fertilize properly, and apply at the right time.

Suffolk County Law 41-2007

Fertilizer applications to lawns between November 1st and April 1st are prohibited.

Violators may be fined up to \$1,000.

This law was passed to reduce nitrogen pollution in our groundwater and surface water caused by improper lawn fertilization.

## Best Practices for a Healthy Lawn

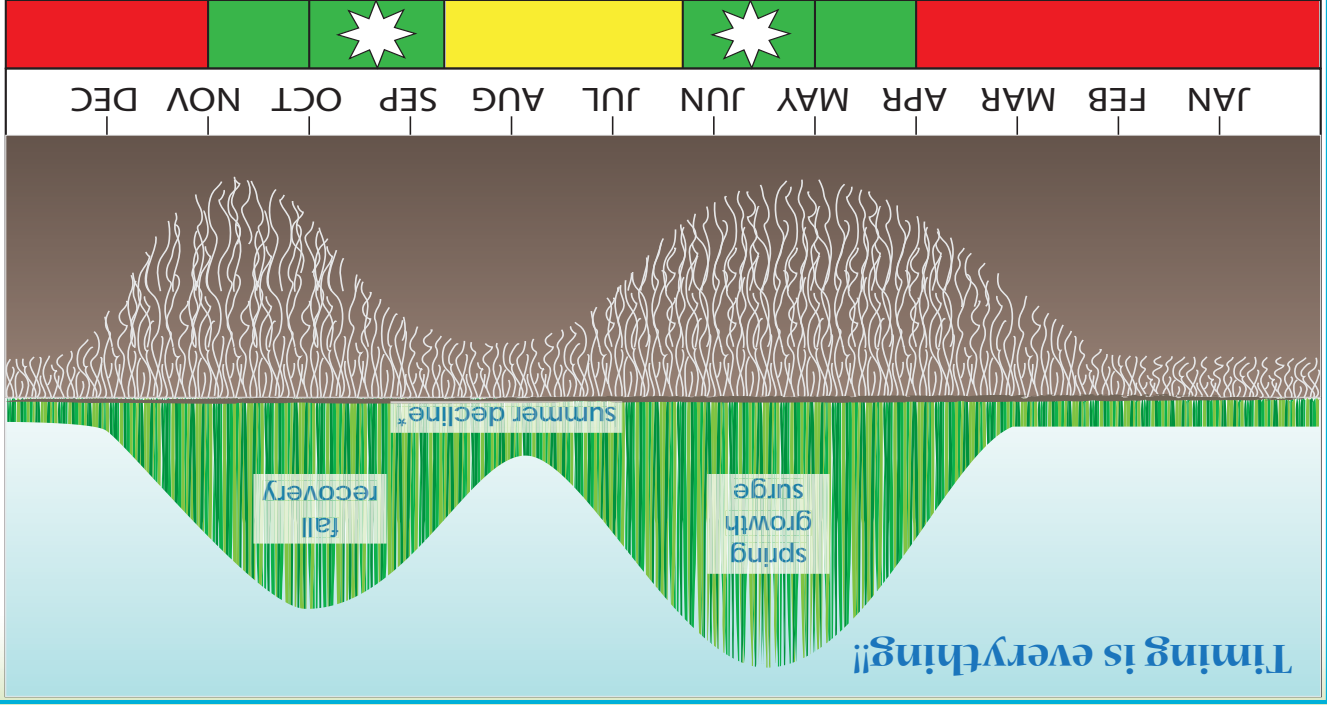
- Mow high – 3 inches or taller – to encourage roots to forage deeply for water and nutrients.
- Leave clippings on the lawn. They will add nutrients to your soil, reducing your fertilizer needs.
- Don't overwater. On average, lawns need about 1 inch of water weekly from rainfall or irrigation. Overwatering can leach nutrients into groundwater. Water to wet soil to 4"-6" depth.
- Check soil pH. When pH is 6.0 to 7.0, roots can use nutrients more efficiently. Apply lime to low pH soils.
- Choose the best grasses for your site. When overseeding bare areas, use pest-resistant varieties and grasses that require less nitrogen. You can achieve a greener lawn naturally by selecting darker green grass varieties.

Be careful when establishing lawns not to apply fertilizer too early. Wait until seeds have germinated or the sod has rooted.

## Tips for Applying Nitrogen

### Fertilizer to Established Lawns

- Make sure you know how big your lawn is and only apply the amount needed. Make sure the spreader is calibrated to apply the correct rate.
- Individual applications of nitrogen should not exceed 1 lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. and should total no more than 2-3 lbs. of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. per year.
- Lightly water in fertilizer after application. A void applying water soluble fertilizers when heavy rainfall is expected.
- Avoid using rotary spreaders near water or impervious surfaces like roads, driveways and sidewalks.
- Sweep up any fertilizer that may land on driveways or sidewalks to avoid fertilizers reaching storm drains.



Fertilizer applications are prohibited at this time. Turf is not actively growing so fertilizer applications are not beneficial. The potential for fertilizer leaching into groundwater or running off into surface water is the greatest during these periods.

Fertilizing during this time of year is acceptable under the law.

Fertilizing during this time of year is acceptable under the law. Lawns are under stress in the summer especially if not receiving any irrigation. Fertilizing during this period is less beneficial.

Fertilizing at these times helps minimize water pollution and are the best times to get a green lawn.

\* Adequate rainfall or irrigation can maintain growth and turf quality throughout the summer.