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 lawn care: Visit Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County’s website www.ccesuffolk.org

About watering lawns: www.nrcc.cornell.edu/grass/moisture/moisture.html

About lawns: Visit Cornell University’s website www.gardening.cornell.edu/lawn/index.html

Attention landscapers! 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.

To find out more information about the course, or to learn more about the Nitrogen Fertilizer Reduction Initiative visit Suffolk County’s website: http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/departments/economicdevelopmentandplanning/waterqualityimprovement/fertilizerreductioninitiative.aspx

About the law: Visit Suffolk County’s website: http://legis.suffolkcountyny.gov/resos2007/l2117-07.htm

To visit the Healthy Lawns Clean Water website go to http://suffolkcountyny.gov/healthylawns
Fertilizer applications are prohibited at this time. Turf is not actively growing so 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. Lawns are under stress in the summer especially if not receiving any irrigation. Fertilizing during this time 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.