



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FERTILIZER LAW

What you need to know LAWN CARE PROFESSIONALS

This law applies specifically to fertilizer that is applied to turf.

Effective April 20, 2013, lawn care professionals who apply fertilizer to turf in the District of Columbia must comply with requirements for how, when, and where to apply fertilizer and the types of fertilizer they can use.

In addition, the Fertilizer Law outlines requirements for fertilizer distributors and retailers in the District on labeling fertilizer, and encourages residents to voluntarily comply with requirements for lawn care professionals.

WHY REGULATE FERTILIZER?

Applying fertilizer correctly benefits plants and can be safe for the environment, but when applied incorrectly, fertilizer runoff has damaging effects. Stormwater sweeps fertilizers downstream into our stormdrains and into Rock Creek and the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. Once in our water bodies fertilizer can cause dangerous algal blooms that are harmful to aquatic and human life. The District's Fertilizer Law is an important step toward ensuring that our waterways are fishable and swimmable.

PRODUCT REQUIREMENTS

- Fertilizer containing **phosphorous** may only be used when a soil test within the past three years shows a phosphorous deficiency, and when using low-phosphorus mixtures.
- Fertilizer containing **nitrogen** must be at least 20% slow release, and only applied at the following rates:
 - < 0.7 lbs per 1,000 ft² if water-soluble
 - < 0.9 lbs per 1,000 ft² of total nitrogen

APPLICATION IS PROHIBITED

1. Between November 15th and March 1st and when the ground is frozen
2. When it is raining, 24 hours before it is expected to rain, or if the soil is saturated
3. Within 15 feet of a waterbody or drainage ditch
4. In excess of the legal rates

MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

- If fertilizer is spilled or accidentally spread onto impervious surfaces, such as sidewalks or driveways, promptly clean it up by sweeping it back onto turf or returning it to a proper storage container.
- Store fertilizer in closed containers that are protected from stormwater, either by storing it inside or elevated off the ground with a waterproof cover.

ENFORCEMENT

Applicators, distributors, and retailers will be subject to inspections. Those who fail to comply may be fined.

FIND OUT MORE. Visit doee.dc.gov/fertilizer for more information and to download the law.