

You and The Chesapeake Bay: Your Lawn Keeping the Bay Blue



Photo by Wayne Gilchrest

- **Lime It, Don't Fertilize It.**
- **Spring is not the time to fertilize.**
- **Test your soil. We have kits.**
- **Maintain proper pH. Nutrients will run off low pH soils.**
- **Grass clippings contain valuable nitrogen.**
- **Don't waste your \$\$\$\$ and time.**
- **See www.extension.umd.edu or call your local Extension Office.**

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your source for research-based information.**

Lime It, Don't Fertilize It.

~ Sabine Harvey, Extension Program Assistant, Horticulture, Kent County Extension

Unless you are growing Zoysia grass or Bermuda grass, **spring is NOT the best time to fertilize your lawn.** The University of Maryland recommends that you do not fertilize your lawn in the Spring at all, unless your turf is weak and thin. Even then, the recommendation is to apply NO MORE than 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet of lawn before the end of May. If a home owner applied what fertilizer companies tell us to do, we would apply about 1.75 lbs. of nitrogen per 1000 square feet by the month of June. **THAT IS THREE TIMES MORE THAN THE RECOMMENDED AMOUNT!**

Fescues and bluegrass that are over-fertilized are more prone to insect damage and diseases, and they are less able to withstand drought during the summer due to a lack of proper root development; not to mention the excess run-off that this much nitrogen creates or the endless mowing that will be required (which in and of itself is a major source of air pollution).

To maintain a healthy lawn, **it is more important that you test your soil and maintain the proper pH.** Our turf is happiest and most capable of absorbing nutrients when the pH is between 6.0 and 6.8. Most Maryland soils tend to have a low pH which reduces absorption of phosphorus (which stimulates root growth), potassium (which increases plant vigor and disease resistance) and magnesium (which helps with photosynthesis) by the grass' root system.. Your money would be better spent buying lime to adjust the pH so the nutrients that are there in the soil are available to the grass.

A soil test will determine if one needs to raise pH by applying LIME. Lime is available at local home and garden centers and can easily be applied with a spreader.

For a reasonable fee you can have your soil tested and get the proper recommendations about what to apply to your turf. **Information on labs that do soil tests is available at your local Extension Office.**

As for nitrogen: Start by leaving grass clippings on your lawn. Grass clippings will return nutrients to the soil, it will save you the work of collecting them and filling up our landfills AND, if you are applying fertilizer in the fall, you can reduce the amount of nitrogen by 25%, which will save money.

In conclusion, have your soil tested, apply lime when necessary, leave your grass clippings on your lawn, **create a sustainable yard and SAVE YOURSELF A BUNDLE OF MONEY AND TIME.**

When is the best time to fertilize your lawn? Between Halloween and Thanksgiving.

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