

## Maryland's Lawn Fertilizer Law in a Nutshell

Maryland's lawn fertilizer law took effect October 1, 2013 and includes rules for fertilizer manufacturers, lawn care professionals and homeowners who fertilize their own lawns. If you are a do-it-yourselfer, here's what you need to know and do to prevent excess fertilizer from washing off your lawn and into streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

- Do not over-fertilize. Follow University of MD fertilizer recommendations at [extension.umd.edu/hgic](http://extension.umd.edu/hgic).
- A single fertilizer application may not exceed 0.9 pound total nitrogen per 1,000 square feet which can include no more than 0.7 pound of soluble nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. For seasonal and yearly fertilizer rates, visit [extension.umd.edu/hgic](http://extension.umd.edu/hgic).
- Most MD lawns have sufficient phosphorus. Do not apply phosphorus to lawns unless a soil test shows that your soil is in the low to medium range or you are establishing or renovating your lawn.
- Keep fertilizer applications 10 – 15 feet from waterways.
- Fertilizer applications are prohibited between November 15 and March 1.
- Do not use fertilizers to de-ice walkways and driveways.
- If fertilizer lands on an impervious surface, sweep it back onto the grass or clean it up.

### How to Read a Fertilizer Label

All fertilizer products are labeled with three numbers separated by dashes that represent the percent by weight of the three most important plant nutrients:

Nitrogen (N) – Promotes green, leafy growth

Phosphorus (P) – Promotes root, fruit and flower development

Potassium (K) – Promotes disease and drought tolerance

These numbers are always displayed in the same order. A 17 lb. bag of 27-0-5 fertilizer contains 27% N, 0% P (as required by MD law) and 5% K. The weight of the fertilizer bag and the amount of area covered by the product are listed on the fertilizer label. Look for this information so that you will know how much fertilizer to buy.

### Fertilize at the Right Time

To prevent runoff, fertilizer should only be applied to lawns when the grass is actively growing. Fertilize warm season grasses (Bermudagrass and Zoysiagrass) in late spring or summer and cool season grasses (fescues, bluegrass) in fall, based on soil test results. Do not exceed single and yearly application limits.

Nitrogen Fertilizer Guide by Turf Type							
Grass	September	October	Late May	Early June	July	August	Maximum Yearly
Tall fescue	0.9 lb	0.9 lb	0.5-0.9 lb <i>if needed</i>		-	-	2.7 lbs
Kentucky bluegrass	0.9 lb	0.9 lb	0.5-0.9 lb <i>if needed</i>		-	-	2.7 lbs
Fine fescue	-	0.9 lb	0.5 lb	-	-	-	1.4 lbs
Bermudagrass	-	-	-	0.9 lb	0.5-0.9 lb <i>if needed</i>		2.7 lbs
Zoysiagrass	-	-	-	0.9 lb	0.5-0.9 lb <i>if needed</i>		1.8 lbs

### Don't Over-Fertilize

Beginning October 1, 2013, fertilizer products sold in MD will be labeled to ensure that no more than 0.9 lb of total nitrogen is applied per 1,000 square feet in a single application. Simply follow the directions on the fertilizer bag to comply with the new fertilizer limits. For quick reference, the chart shows common lawn fertilizer formulations and the amount of fertilizer needed to supply an application rate of 0.9 lb of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet or a lighter application of 0.5 lb of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

Numbers on fertilizer bag	Amount of fertilizer needed to supply 0.9 lb of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet	Amount of fertilizer needed to supply 0.5 lb of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet
6-0-0	15 lbs	8.3 lbs
10-0-4	9 lbs	5 lbs
15-0-6	6 lbs	3.3 lbs
20-0-5	4.5 lbs	2.5 lbs
30-0-3	3 lbs	1.7 lbs
35-0-5	2.5 lbs	1.4 lbs

### Mow to the Right Height

- Mow the grass high to shade out weeds and conserve moisture
- Remove no more than 1/3 of the grass height each time you mow
- Sharpen your lawnmower blade in spring

Mowing Heights		
Turf Type	Spring & Summer	Fall
Tall fescue	2 ½ - 3 ½ inches	2 ½ inches
Kentucky bluegrass	2 ½ - 3 ½ inches	2 - 2 ½ inches
Fine fescue	2 ½ - 3 ½ inches	2 ½ inches
Bermudagrass	1 ½ - 2 inches	1 ½ - 2 inches
Zoysiagrass	1 ½ - 2 inches	1 ½ - 2 inches