

How Does the Countywide Fertilizer Ordinance Affect You?

A county-wide fertilizer ordinance recently went into effect to regulate the use of fertilizers in Pinellas County. What does this mean to you, as a Clearwater resident? It's not a fertilizer ban. You can still fertilize your lawn and gardens, but new regulations limit the types of fertilizers used during the summer, rainy months. Since Florida experiences such hot, long summers, this is when most residents water their lawns. It's important to know the new regulations, since they will help to reduce harmful nutrients (such as nitrogen and phosphorous) found in fertilizers and keep them from polluting our waterways.



This ordinance restricts the amounts of fertilizer used that can run off lawns and drains, which flow into the city's storm drains, ponds, creeks, rivers, canals, and eventually to Tampa Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. Excessive fertilizer use – after it drains to the bay– can cause algae blooms which suffocate fish, endanger marine wildlife, and deteriorate water quality.

If you plan to fertilize, here's what you need to know:

- Clearwater – and all County – residents may apply fertilizers to their lawns from Oct. 1 through May 31.
- Fertilizers containing nitrogen and/or phosphorus cannot be applied to lawns or landscape plants from June 1 to September 30.
- Don't apply fertilizer if the National Weather Service has issued a weather advisory in Pinellas County for events like severe thunderstorms, floods, tropical storms, or if rains greater than two inches in a 24-hour period is predicted.
- Fertilizer with nitrogen cannot be applied on newly established lawns or landscape plants for the first 30 days.
- If granular fertilizers containing nitrogen are used, they must contain no less than 50 percent slow-release nitrogen, per guaranteed analysis label.
- Fertilizer cannot be applied or deposited onto any solid surface, such as driveways, sidewalks, and roads, nor can they be washed, swept, or blown off such surfaces into stormwater drains, ditches, roadways, or surface waters. If this occurs, the fertilizer must be immediately removed to the greatest extent possible.
- If using broadcast or rotary fertilizer spreaders, deflector shields must deflect fertilizer granules from all solid surfaces and surface waters.
- A fertilizer-free zone is a 10-foot buffer from a wetland, top of the bank of a surface water, or landward edge of a seawall. Fertilizer cannot be applied within this zone.

If you have questions or to learn more, call the Pinellas County Watershed Management Division at (727) 464-4425.