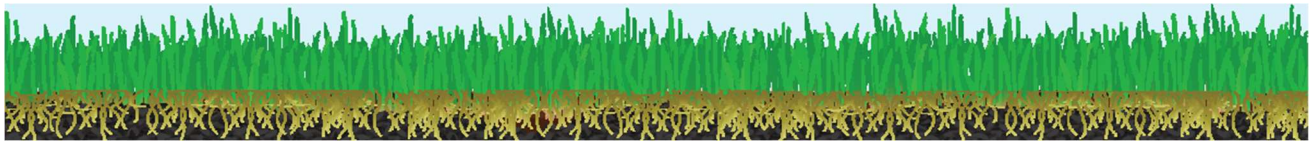


## CONSIDER A SOIL TEST – GREEN LAWNS DON'T HAVE TO EQUAL GREEN LAKES



Nutrients are a good thing. Or are they?

Unfortunately, local lakes and streams are receiving a surplus of nutrients, namely phosphorus and nitrogen. Too many nutrients can cause the rapid growth of algae that reduces the available oxygen to aquatic life, looks unappealing and causes unpleasant odors. Too many nutrients in our waters also leads directly to a decline in Colorado's drinking water quality.

One primary source of excess phosphorus and nitrogen is the misuse and improper applications of fertilizers. **To make sure you aren't incorrectly applying fertilizer, take a soil test and follow all recommended practices.** Soil tests are available for purchase at garden centers or the CSU Soil Test Lab. The test results will help determine the type and amount of fertilizer your lawn needs. Most Colorado lawns have adequate phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) but may require nitrogen (N).

According to Colorado State University Extension Service, the following nitrogen applications are recommended for a typical Colorado lawn where grass clippings are not removed after mowing.

**Table 1: Fertilizer application schedule for established Colorado lawns.**

Turfgrass Species	Mid-March to April <sup>1</sup>	May to mid-June	July to early August	Mid-August to mid-September	Early October to early November <sup>2</sup>
(nitrogen application rates are in pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn area)					
High Maintenance Bluegrass/Ryegrass	1/2-1	1	not required	1	1-(2)
Low-Maintenance Bluegrass	1/2	1/2-1	not required	1	(1)
Turf-Type Tall Fescue	1/2	1/2-1	not required	1	(1)
Fine Fescue	1/2	1/2-1	not required	1/2-1	not required
Buffalograss/Blue Grama/Bermudagrass	Apply no N	1/2-1	1/2-1	Apply no N	Apply no N

<sup>1</sup> The March-April nitrogen application may not be needed if you fertilized late (September to November) the previous year. If spring green-up and growth is satisfactory, delay fertilizing until May or June.

<sup>2</sup> When grass is still green

- Optional N applications shown in (). Use extra nitrogen applications where a higher quality turf is desired or on heavily used turf.
- Make the final fall nitrogen application (October-November) while the grass is still green and at least two to three weeks before the ground begins to freeze in your area.
- On very sandy soils, do not fertilize turf after late September. Nitrogen can leach into groundwater during the winter months. Use slow-release nitrogen fertilizers (sulfur-coated urea, IBDU and natural organic-based fertilizers) on sandy soils throughout the year to reduce the potential for leaching losses.
- Nitrogen application can often be reduced by 1/4 to 1/3 when grass clippings are returned to the lawn during mowing. Nitrogen and other nutrients contained in the clippings are recycled into the lawn as they decompose. **Grass clippings do not contribute to thatch accumulation in lawns.**

Source: Colorado State University Extension Fact Sheet 7.202, Lawn Care (Revised 3/2012).

For more in-depth information about best practices for lawns, go to: <https://arapahoe.extension.colostate.edu>.

### Other Tips for Protecting Water Quality:

- ♣ Consider using less or no fertilizer
- ♣ Turn portions of your lawn into a xeric garden.
- ♣ Do not apply fertilizers near streams, lakes, ponds, or drainageways.
- ♣ Never apply fertilizers before a rain. Store fertilizers and other lawn chemicals in a covered, dry location. Use slow release forms of fertilizer when possible. Sweep up and dispose of any fertilizers that land on pavement.



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