

The 4 1 1 on Fall Fertilization

Chances are you're already aware that your lawn needs nutrients. If that's where your knowledge on the matter ends, don't worry. Consider this a crash course on lawn fertilization and be sure to call us if you have any questions.

Proper fertilization takes planning, skill and a bit of important knowledge. The keys to success include fertilizing on a regular schedule, using the right materials and applying just the right amount – not too much, and not too little.

Lawns should be fertilized throughout the year, but the final treatment in fall is the most vital to your turf's overall health. A boost of nutrients now will give your grass what it needs to grow new and stronger roots before going dormant for the winter. The end result is a lawn that is greener earlier in the year, less susceptible to winter and spring diseases and resistant to stress from summer heat and drought.

Your lawn needs at least eighteen elements from air, water and soil for proper growth. These range from heavily used hydrogen and carbon to lesser used zinc and iron. For the most part, natural processes will provide your lawn the proper amount of each required element.

However, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are what most fertilizers consist of because your lawn needs more of these over the course of a growing season than is typically naturally available in the soil. Adequate levels of each are important for a variety of reasons:

- **Nitrogen** promotes greener grass and produces vigorous growth. Too little, and grass will be stunted and yellow. Too much, and top growth will occur too quickly, leaving weak roots and a lowered tolerance to environmental stresses.
- **Phosphorus*** encourages root growth, particularly in young turf, and promotes vigor in early plants.
- **Potassium** builds proteins, aids in photosynthesis and helps reduce susceptibility to disease.

Scheduling fall fertilization this year is an investment you don't want to pass up. The payoffs for your lawn will be a stable winter, healthier spring, and a greener summer and fall.

**Use of phosphorus must be monitored in certain watershed areas.*



Your Fall Checklist

With the days getting shorter and nights crisper, it's time to put some final – but important – touches on your landscape. Tending to the following fall tasks now will let your lawn and plants bounce back more quickly in the spring.

- ✓ Don't put the mower away too soon! Keep mowing regularly until the grass has gone completely dormant and stops growing.
- ✓ Mulching grass clippings and leaves into the lawn's soil will go a long way to boosting the organic matter in your soil, so leave the bag off these last few weeks.
- ✓ Remove built up leaves, sticks and other fall debris from around plants and shrubs. This will minimize nesting spots for mice and other rodents.
- ✓ Late in the season, apply a layer of mulch to all your planting beds and around established shrubs. Mulch helps the soil retain moisture and keeps soil temperatures more stable.

Even with the season slowing down, there is plenty to still do. Be sure to take the time this year to prepare your landscape for the upcoming winter. You'll be thanking yourself come springtime – and so will your plants!

