

# HEALTHY LAWNS - HEALTHY WATER

## Certification of Lawn Care Professionals

Please be advised that as of **January 5, 2012**, all lawn care professionals must be certified in order to apply fertilizer in New Jersey. Rutgers University is administering the online training and certification program. Online training will be available in **mid-December, 2011**, and access to the test will follow. The fees to become certified or trained are as follows:

### Certified Fertilizer Applicator:

\$75 fee for the first year (training and testing)

\$25 annual fee for the subsequent three years

### Trained Fertilizer Applicator:

\$25 annual fee

To access the lawn care certification training modules and test visit, <http://profact.rutgers.edu>

## Help Spread the Word - But NOT the Fertilizer!

According to New Jersey's fertilizer law, as of **November 15, 2011** residents cannot apply fertilizers containing nitrogen or phosphorus to their lawns until next spring (**March 1, 2012**).

Commercial fertilizer applicators must complete their customer service cycle of late fall nitrogen or phosphorus fertilization **by December 1, 2011**. Fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorus cannot be applied onto lawns again until **March 1, 2012**.

Please note that all other materials, such as products containing potassium, lime and composts, are still legal to apply during the **blackout dates** of November/December through March.



On January 5, 2011, Governor Chris Christie signed into law the most restrictive fertilizer content standards in the nation for nitrogen and phosphorus. The law also requires specific fertilizer application practices. These standards and practices will help reduce pollution from nutrients in all of New Jersey's waters.

Specifically, the law decreases the total amount of nitrogen in fertilizer and increases the amount of slow release nitrogen to 20 percent. In addition, it requires no phosphorus in fertilizer unless a soil test indicates it is needed.

Nitrogen and Phosphorus are nutrients required for plant growth. A limited amount of these nutrients is important for healthy plant life. An overabundance, however, not only can harm lawns, but when washed into our waterways, stimulates excessive algae and weed growth. This in turn depletes oxygen from the water and reduces the sunlight needed for healthy aquatic life.

Other key components of the new law include: the creation of a fertilizer application certification program for professional fertilizer applicators and public education on correct fertilizer use.

### **The timeframe for implementation of the law is:**

**Phase I:** Effective **immediately**, fertilizer may not be applied from November 15 through March 1 by residential consumers and from December 1 through March 1 by professionals. Application of fertilizer is restricted during winter months when the ground is frozen and not able to be absorbed allowing it to be washed away when it rains. Fertilizer application is prohibited during – or just before – heavy rainfall, and on impervious ground. Fertilizer containing phosphorus or nitrogen can not be applied within 25 feet of any water body except when applied with a drop spreader or targeted spray – then the buffer may be reduced to 10 feet.

**Phase II:** Effective **January 5, 2012**, all professional applicators will be required to undergo training and become certified through the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station at Rutgers University. Rutgers University is in the process of developing the training program in consultation with the department's Healthy Lawns Healthy Water workgroup.

**Phase III:** Effective **January 5, 2013**, all fertilizer product for turf must contain at least 20 percent slow-release nitrogen, and zero phosphorus unless a soil test demonstrates a need for more.

For more information on the New Jersey's fertilizer law visit, [www.nj.gov/dep/healthylawnshealthywater/](http://www.nj.gov/dep/healthylawnshealthywater/)

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
[www.CleanWaterNJ.org](http://www.CleanWaterNJ.org)

