

Florida's Green Industries: Promoting Healthy Turfgrass. Protecting Healthy Waterways.



Many misconceptions surround the relationship between urban lawn fertilization and nitrogen and phosphorous loading into Florida waterways. Properly allocating various non-point sources of nutrient loading, particularly nitrogen, into waterways is very complex and dynamic. There are many different current and legacy sources of nitrogen in an urban environment, such as atmospheric deposition and septic tank leaching, which are major contributing factors to elevated nitrogen levels in waterways.

There has been a great deal of scientific, peer-reviewed research conducted on landscape turfgrass and fertilization use and the consensus of published research is clear – fertilizer properly applied to healthy turfgrass results in insignificant leaching or runoff, even under extreme conditions of rain, slope of landscape, or excess fertilization. Experts agree that a dense vegetative cover of turfgrass reduces pollution and non-point sources of run-off that otherwise would flow more efficiently into waterways.

Florida's green industry professionals are doing their part to minimize potential nitrogen and phosphorous loading into waterways via improper fertilization. We support the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's *Model Ordinance for Florida-Friendly Use of Fertilizer on Urban Landscapes* (FDEP Model Ordinance) to ensure the education of, and adherence to, proper fertilization practices. However, we do not support arbitrary, unenforceable and non-scientific restrictions that were rejected from inclusion in the FDEP Model Ordinance, such as summertime blackout periods and fixed-percentage slow release nitrogen requirements. These restrictions are not supported by science, may lead to weakened turf health and less efficient filtration of potential pollutants, and may seriously undermine the protection of water quality and property rights of Floridians across the state.

All Floridians share the common goal of best protecting water bodies from excess nutrient runoff and leaching. Experts and scientists agree that the FDEP Model Ordinance is the best way to harmonize urban green space and water quality.