



FERTILIZER FACTS

What is the problem?

Fertilizing lawns can create and maintain healthy grass. However over fertilizing can harm our environment because excess will run off the surface and into storm drains that run directly into Cache La Poudre and South Platte Rivers. In the rivers, the fertilizers still promote growth but now the growth means algae and other aquatic plants can grow to abnormal proportions clogging the rivers and beginning a chain-event of environmental hazards including foul smelling water, unsightly vegetation, and fish-kills.

How can I fertilize without polluting?

Keep three things in mind:

1. Fertilize only when necessary
2. Buy the right type of fertilizer
3. Apply fertilizers properly.

When should I fertilize my lawn?

Look for signs that your lawn is nutrient deficient. These signs include yellowing grass or grass that shows little or no growth. The best time to look for these signs is during normally high growth periods (spring and fall).

What type of fertilizer should I buy?

Look for words like "slow-release" and "organic" on the label. Examples of organic fertilizers include:

1. Worm Castings
2. Compost
3. Blood Meal
4. Manure

Both types of "slow-release" and "organic" deliver nutrients slowly which ensures healthier lawn growth and reduces the likelihood that your fertilizer will end up in run off from your property and therefore in lakes and rivers.

How should I apply fertilizer?

To effectively fertilize your lawn you need to make sure the nutrients get to the grass and don't simply run off the ground during the next storm event. **Never fertilize before a rain event because the rainfall will cause the fertilizer to run off!**

Follow these four guidelines to ensure effective fertilizing:

1. **Prepare your lawn** – Loose soil helps your lawn soak up water and nutrients. To loosen the soil, aerate it by punching many deep holes into it then dethatch the lawn by raking up dead roots and stems on the soil's surface.
2. **Follow directions** – Check the product label of the fertilizer you chose. Never apply more than the recommended amount.
3. **Spread correctly** – Remember we are trying to keep the fertilizer out of the stormwater drainage system. Keep in mind that any fertilizer that is applied onto impervious surfaces such as sidewalks and driveways will simply runoff during the next storm event.
4. **Water In** – Water in the fertilizer with a hose or sprinkler to allow nutrients to get into the soil **but be careful not to over water causing runoff**.

What other ways can fertilizers get into lakes and streams?

Soil washing off your property can lead to water pollution because many substances, including nutrients, attach to soil particles. This is good if plants are available to use these nutrients through their root systems, but not if the soil simply erodes or washes off the surface and into the storm drains where water will dissolve them and aquatic plants will use them to grow excessively. Protect your soil by making sure bare spots are covered by vegetation or mulch.