

# New Jersey's Fertilizer Law

*New Jersey's Fertilizer Law, enacted on January 5, 2011, is really about water quality. It still allows you to feed your lawn, but in a way that reduces adverse impact on New Jersey waters.*

## Why the Law is Important

The rainwater that falls on our lawns and gardens pick up chemicals from fertilizers that we use to beautify our properties. This water flows directly to the nearest stream, often into our drinking water supply.

When nutrients become too abundant in our waterways, "blooms" of algae form and eventually die off and get consumed by bacteria. The bacteria deplete oxygen in the water, robbing it from marine life that needs oxygen to survive and causing water pollution.

## What the Law Requires

To protect our State's waterways from excess nutrients in stormwater runoff, New Jersey's new Fertilizer Law requires residents to follow these rules:

- At least 20 percent of nitrogen in lawn fertilizers must be a slow release variety.
- Do not apply fertilizers within 25 feet of a waterway.
- Avoid applying lawn fertilizer when rain is falling or predicted.
- Never apply fertilizer when the ground is frozen or at times when the ground typically cannot absorb nutrients, specifically from Nov. 15 to March 1.
- Professional lawn care providers may not apply fertilizer from Dec. 1 through March 15.

## About Phosphorous

Fertilizers containing phosphorous may not be applied to turf except when:

- A soil test, no more than three years old, indicates the need for it;
- You are establishing turf or vegetation for the first time;
- You are repairing or re-establishing turf;
- You are applying liquid or granular fertilizer under the soil surface, directly to roots;
- The fertilizer consists of manipulated animal or vegetable waste, if it includes no more than 1/4 pound of phosphorous per 1,000 sq. ft. of treated area.

## Download Education and Outreach Materials

[Healthy Lawn and Clean Water Guide](#)  
[Rutgers Organic Land Care Manual](#)

## Other Resources

- [NJ Department of Environmental Protection](#)
- [New Jersey Environmental Center](#)
- [Rutgers Cooperative Extension](#)
- [NRCS Backyard nutrient management](#)