

## Why Care?

Did you know the EPA considers stormwater runoff from yards, streets, parking lots and other areas to be one of the most significant sources of contamination in our country's waters?



Nitrogen and phosphorus can cause problems with the quality of our water. They are needed by all plants for healthy growth, but must be applied properly. Individual lawns and gardens seem small but, the total planted area in Delaware is large. So, apply fertilizer properly and protect both the environment and your lawn and landscape plants.

## The Livable Lawns Way



**This healthy lawn was fertilized with just enough nutrients to keep it green and vigorous.**

The goal of the Delaware Livable Lawns initiative is simple - reduce fertilizer and pesticide runoff from lawns.

Certified Livable Lawns companies agree to participate in this program that goes above and beyond the Delaware Nutrient Management Law. They are monitored for:

- Applying fertilizer based on soil tests so only enough fertilizer to achieve a healthy lawn is applied.
- Using best management practices to prevent fertilizers from leaching into groundwater, ponds, streams or lakes.

**A healthy lawn allows you to walk comfortably throughout your landscape.**



## Project participants

- Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT)
- Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control
- Delaware Department of Agriculture Nutrient Management Commission
- New Castle Conservation District
- New Castle County
- US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service
- University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration Water Resources Agency
- University of Delaware Cooperative Extension
- Delaware Nursery & Landscape Association
- Delaware Grounds Management Association
- Delaware Nature Society
- Partnership for the Delaware Estuary
- City of Dover
- The Advisory Group thanks DelDOT for providing initial funding for the Delaware Livable Lawns Program.

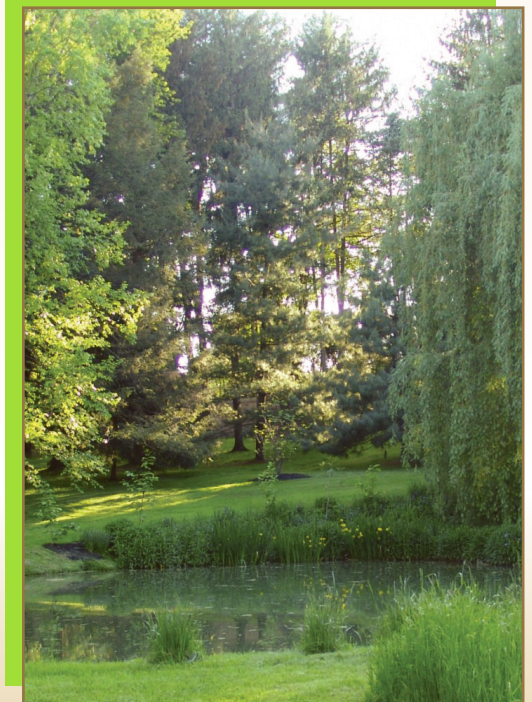
To learn about all the fertilizer recommendations and best management practices visit:  
[www.delawarelivablelawns.org](http://www.delawarelivablelawns.org)



Delaware Nursery  
& Landscape  
Association



**Help save Delaware's rivers and bays one lawn at a time!**



**Healthy Lawns, Healthy Waters**



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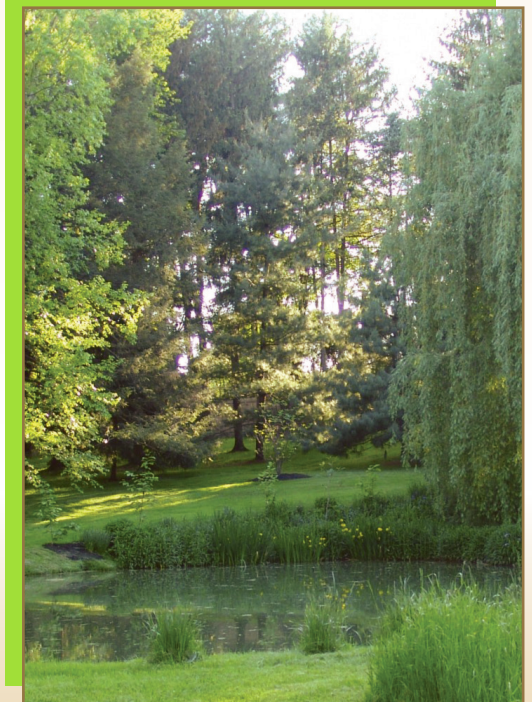
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## Delaware Livable Lawns Practices

- Leave grass clippings on your lawn.
- Include more than just grass in your landscape.
- Verify that your lawn needs fertilizer by testing your soil before application.
- Apply fertilizer according to directions.
- Be sure to sweep excess fertilizer and lawn clippings off your sidewalks and driveways.
- Leave fertilization until the fall.
- Establish a no-mow buffer around waterways.

## Fertilizer Recommendations:

Turfgrass categories	Cool season grasses	Warm season grasses
Examples	tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, fine fescue, Kentucky bluegrass	bermudagrass, zoysiagrass
Total N/year	1.5-3 lbs N/ 1000 square feet	
Rates and dates with less than 35% slowly available N (in lbs N/ 1000 sq. ft.)	March-June 15: 0.5 lb* Sept: 1 lb Oct: 1 lb Nov: 0.5 lb	May: 1 lb June: 1 lb July/Aug: 1 lb
Rates and dates with 35% or more slowly available N (in lbs N/ 1000 sq. ft.)	September: 2 lb or August: 1.5 lb October: 1.5 lb	May: 1.5 lb July: 1.5 lb

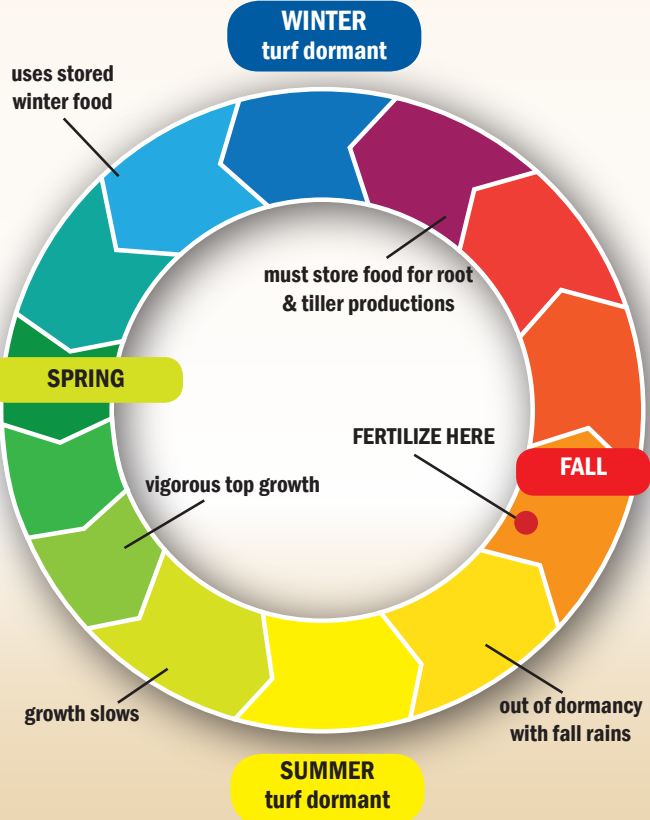
\* Spring fertilization is optional and only used to get quick spring green up.

## Monthly Garden Calendar

- January**—Plan plantings for the upcoming year.
- February**—Prune trees to reshape and remove crossing or rubbing branches.
- March**—Cut back perennials. Transplant or plant new trees and shrubs. Spread yard waste compost on beds to conserve water and reduce weeds.
- April**—Apply preemergent herbicide to lawn if you had a crabgrass problem last year. Apply a small amount of fertilizer for green up. Sharpen your mower blade. Plant perennials.
- May**—Plant annuals in mid-May. Move houseplants outdoors to shady location. Cut your lawn frequently enough to return clippings to the lawn. Maintain a height of at least 4".
- June**—Remove flower heads from flowering plants to prolong bloom. Sharpen your mower blade.
- July**—Keep newly planted trees and shrubs watered by soaking thoroughly once a week. Keep the garden weeded. Increase the mowing height of your lawn.
- August**—Do not let weeds go to seed. Reseed or renovate lawns in mid-late August.
- September**—Plant perennials, trees and shrubs. Fertilize your lawn. Core aerate your lawn.
- October**—Fertilize your lawn if necessary. Move and divide crowded perennials. Plant spring-blooming bulbs.
- November**—Clean up the garden and put yard waste in the compost pile. Rake leaves from lawn areas, shred and spread on beds.
- December**—Winterize lawn mowers and other equipment.

## Why fertilize in the fall?

- In the fall, grass grows primarily roots and new grass plants, so fall fertilization results in denser, healthier, more deeply rooted lawns.
- In the spring, grass puts its energy into growing leaves. When you fertilize in the spring, you get quick green up, but you also have to cut your lawn more frequently.
- Look at the diagram below to see why fall is best.



## What about organic vs. synthetic?

- Lots of people think organic products are good for your lawn and synthetic products are bad. It is just not that simple. Organic matter tilled into your soil to improve soil structure—like composted yard waste or mushroom soil—is great for improving soil quality and plant growth. But organic fertilizers are not necessarily better for your lawn.
- The real issue is how readily available are the nutrients. So, for lawn fertilization, it is best to think in terms of quick release nitrogen and slow release nitrogen. Some organic products are quick release (fresh poultry manure) and some are slow (composted cow manure). Some synthetic products are quick release (urea) and some are slow (sulfur coated urea). Slow release fertilizer may be more expensive, but it allows you to fertilize less frequently and is safer to use when rain is predicted. So select the right fertilizer for your lawn based on the timing and the amount you want to apply.

### Quick release nitrogen

- ☐ Water soluble
- ☐ Available immediately
- ☐ May leach
- ☐ Usually inexpensive

### Slow release nitrogen

- ☐ Water insoluble (variety of release mechanisms)
- ☐ Released over time
- ☐ Rarely leach
- ☐ Usually more expensive