



Best Management Practices - Lawn Care*

*Developed from "Best Management Practices for the Lawn, JCCE

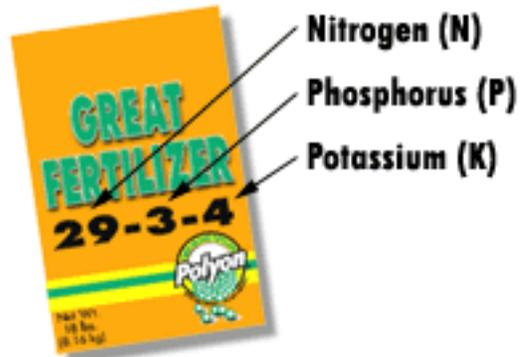
What are Best Management Practices?

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are basically common sense standard operating practices that can reduce the threat that normal activities in homes or businesses can pose to ground and surface water supplies. BMPs have been developed for many activities that involve the storage, handling, use, distribution, or transport of hazardous or toxic substances. They can help prevent the release of these substances or control these releases in an environmentally sound manner. They can also save you time and money!

Fertilizing

Did you know that by maintaining a healthy lawn is actually good for the environment? Just watch the use and application of fertilizers and pesticides. To maintain a high-quality lawn, you should likely apply a fertilizer every year. To know how much fertilizer to apply, you should have a soil test performed on your lawn every 3 or 4 years. The Jefferson County Cooperative Extension (502-569-2344) or your local nursery can help you test your lawn. (For more information about a healthy lawn, read "A Healthy Lawn Helps the Environment".) Here are some important things to remember:

- The rule of thumb for nitrogen application is one pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 ft² of lawn.
- The best time to apply nitrogen is in the fall for cool-season grasses such as tall fescue and bluegrass. This helps build a strong root system, making the grass more resistant to insects and weeds, and more drought tolerant.
- When applying fertilizer, it is important to calibrate your spreader! Call the Jefferson County Cooperative Extension (502-569-2344) for more information on how to calibrate your spreader.
- If fertilizer lands on the sidewalk or street, sweep it back onto the lawn. It is of no use to fertilize concrete and it may be washed away, contaminating surface water and groundwater.
- Do not apply fertilizer when heavy rains are predicted.
- Be sure to thoroughly wash out the spreader after use. Fertilizer left in a metal spreader will corrode the spreader. Be sure all rinse water drains on the lawn and not the sidewalk or driveway.



Mowing

Correct mowing techniques are also necessary for a high quality lawn. Mowing too closely will make it susceptible to weeds and disease. (For more information, see "A Healthy Lawn Helps the Environment".)

- A dull blade on the mower is harder on the mower and uses more fuel. Sharpen your mower blade four to six times a year.
- Mow when the grass is dry. Wet grass causes the mower to bog down and causes uneven cuts.

Don't Bag it

Clippings are good for your lawn. Did you know they:

- ◆ Do not cause thatch? The collection of clippings has no effect on the accumulation of thatch.
- ◆ Are natural sources of fertilizer? Clippings return up to 25% of a lawn's annual needs in nutrients.
- ◆ Are a waste of your valuable time and effort if you collect and dispose of them?
- ◆ Increase landfill loads that may contribute to groundwater pollution?

If you must collect clippings, try using them as mulch around ornamental plants or between rows in the garden. Doing so reduces weed competition, conserves soil moisture, and returns nutrients to the soil. If used in the garden, turn the clippings occasionally so they don't become matted. You can also use them in your compost pile. A composted mixture of clippings, leaves, wood chips, etc. are great to modify garden soil.

Watering

When you water the lawn, remember two things—water deeply and infrequently. Don't use an automatic timer system, as it often waters the lawn even if it is raining.

- ◆ Water only during excessively dry periods. Apply about one inch of water, once or twice a week if no rain occurs.
- ◆ Early morning is the best time of day to water. Watering early in the day washes dew from leaves and allows leaves to dry faster, discouraging disease.
- ◆ Place an empty pie pan in the line of the sprinkler. When the water level in the pan reaches about 1 inch, you have watered enough.
- ◆ Watering is required for turf mowed close and fertilized in the spring and/or summer.



Always Remember:

If you use pesticides on the lawn, read and follow label directions. Wear the appropriate protective clothing. Keep pets and children off the lawn for the recommended amount of time, according to the label, or at least until the lawn is dry if not otherwise specified. Try to keep wildlife off the lawn by using plastic owls, plastic snakes, tin pie pans tied to trees, or other means to repel the wildlife from the lawn.

The Jefferson County Cooperative Extension Service (502-569-2344) is available to answer questions or help with soil tests, weed or disease identification.



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