

## Lawn fertilizer...

### What do those numbers mean?

The numbers on a bag of fertilizer represent the percentage of the three main nutrients; Nitrogen (N), Phosphorous (P), and Potassium (K). A bag of 12-12-12 fertilizer will contain 12% of each, the remaining consisting of inactive ingredients.

**N - P - K** are always listed in the same order, so the next time you pick up a bag of lawn fertilizer, look for **0 in the middle!**

### If I don't live along the river why does the ordinance matter to me?

Although you may not live directly along one of our many beautiful rivers or lakes, storm drains connect directly to them. When a pollutant gets into the storm drains, it flows to one of our rivers or lakes without being cleaned. Limiting pollutants into the storm drain systems help keep the waters of Allegan County clean.



The water on earth right now is all the water we will ever have.  
**Do your part to keep it clean!**

## What the ordinance means for you.

- Effective January 1, 2009
- Applies to all areas of Allegan County
- Enforced by the Allegan County Health Department
- Each violation will be a civil infraction punishable by a fine of \$50.00 for the first infraction, \$150.00 for the second and \$300.00 for the third.
- Agriculture, yard waste, new lawn establishment and other exemptions are specified in the ordinance.
- Never apply fertilizer to a hard surface such as sidewalk or parking lot. If a spill or accidental application occurs, immediately sweep up and legally apply to lawn or return to container.
- Fertilizer of any type should not be applied prior to March 15 or after November 15 in any year due to the inability of frozen soil to absorb nutrients.
- Soil Test! If you think your lawn needs phosphorous, contact Michigan State University Extension or another authorized soil testing entity to find out!

### Partners



Michigan's  
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Program



## Allegan County

# Phosphorous fertilizer ban...



## Information for Residents and Businesses

# What does the Phosphorous Fertilizer ban mean to you?

## Lawn Fertilizer Ordinance

### Frequently Asked Questions

- **What about Agriculture?**  
The ordinance specifically states that application of phosphorous fertilizer for agricultural purposes is exempt from the ban.
- **Doesn't my lawn need phosphorous?**  
Yes, all plants need phosphorous to grow properly. However, most soil types have more than enough naturally occurring phosphorous to sustain healthy lawn growth. Why apply more than the plants can even use?
- **My local store does not carry phosphorous free lawn fertilizer, what can I do?**  
Try making a recommendation that your store carry some phosphorous free options and why it is important. Many store owners are happy to listen to constructive advice.
- **How can I tell if my soil needs phosphorous?**  
A soil test is simple, inexpensive and will quickly tell you if your soil is low on phosphorous or any other nutrient. For more information about soil tests, contact the Michigan State University Extension office at (269)673-0370



Look for 0 in the middle!

## What's the big deal about phosphorous anyway?

Phosphorous is important for seed development, root growth and for maturation of your lawn. It is, however, a primary water quality concern in Michigan. An excess of fertilizer on lawns, sidewalks and driveways can make its way to lakes and streams by storm drains or over land when it rains. As phosphorous adheres to soil particles, erosion can carry it directly into surface waters. This can cause nuisance aquatic weed growth and algae blooms, effectively choking area waters. Please, NEVER apply phosphorous fertilizers on lawns adjacent to lakes, rivers, streams or wetlands.



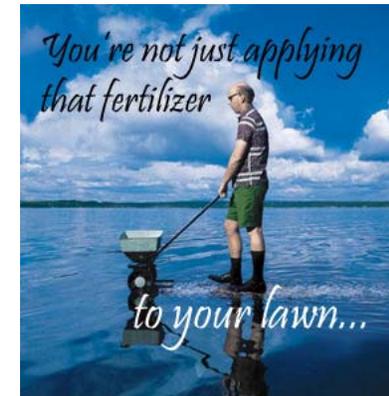
## Purpose and Intent of the ordinance

The Allegan County Board of Commissioners finds that Allegan County's lakes, rivers and streams are natural assets, which enhance the environmental, recreational, cultural and economic resources of the area and contribute to the general health and welfare of the public. The Board further finds that regulating the amount of nutrients and contaminants, including phosphorus contained in lawn fertilizer, entering the lakes, rivers and streams of Allegan County will improve and maintain lake and stream water quality by reducing algae blooms and the excess growth and spread of other aquatic plants. The Allegan County Board of Commissioners finds that unreasonable adverse effects on the environment of Allegan County and on the public health of the citizens of Allegan County and the visitors to Allegan County will occur unless this Ordinance is adopted to ban and/ or control the use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus.

Once you have selected the no-phosphorus fertilizer product you prefer, remember:

Apply less fertilizer, less often. If you fertilize just once each year, fall is the best time to apply it because it helps you lawn repair itself and prepare for optimal growth in the spring.

Take proper care of you lawn and you can reduce or eliminate the need for fertilizer. Keep your lawn at least three inches tall, and never cut more than 1/3 of the blade each time you mow. Taller grass has deeper, healthier roots and is more drought tolerant and prevents weed infestations. When you do cut the grass, mulch the clippings back into your lawn. Mulching adds nitrogen and organic matter, which is necessary to prevent soil compaction.



## For more information

Allegan Conservation District  
(269)673-8965 ext. 3  
[www.allegancd.org](http://www.allegancd.org)

Allegan County Health Department  
(269)673-5411  
[www.allegancounty.org](http://www.allegancounty.org)