

Phosphorus-Free Lawn Fertilizer Questions for Landscapers



COLORADO – Lawn Owners Using Landscaping Companies

The following document is geared for lawn owners that have or are looking to hire a private landscaping company to take care of their lawn. It is important for a lawn owner to know what your landscaping company is doing to help protect the watershed while managing your lawn. The list of questions below are for you to ask your landscaping company. Feel free to provide a copy of this document directly to the workers that maintain your lawn, so they understand your expectations.



Green Lawns, Blue Waters - Protecting Colorado's Water One Yard at a Time.

Question 1: What kind of fertilizer are you using, and can it be phosphorus free? It is important that it is phosphorus free to minimize impact to downstream lakes and creeks in our watershed.

Question 2: Can you let me know what the fertilizer nutrient percentages are and if there are supplements you are using (e.g., iron, enzymes, or other metals)? What are the N:P:K numbers?

Question 3: Will you please mulch my lawn clippings and leave them on my lawn so that the nutrients can be recycled directly back to my lawn? Mulching is better for the environment and keeps valuable organic material out of our landfills. If you do have to collect clippings, how do you dispose of them?

Questions 4: Will you make sure to remove any fertilizers from my sidewalk, driveway, and any other impervious surfaces? It is important to keep fertilizers and lawn clippings away from our streets and storm drains. Please pick up all spills completely. The smallest amount can harm water quality.

Questions 5: Will you collect soil samples from my lawn to determine what and how much fertilizer it will need? If you do soil testing, can I see the results? If you don't do soil testing, how do you determine how much fertilizer my lawn needs?

Question 6: Do you watch the weather forecast to avoid applying fertilizers just before, during, and after a storm? I don't want my fertilizer to wash away or be applied to saturated soils.

Question 7: How do you clean up at the end of your visit? Please do not sweep or blow lawn clippings and leaves into the street. That material only ends up in the storm drain and goes to the local stream.

Question 8: Is your company and the employees that will be working on my lawn certified or have any training about lawn care and minimizing impacts to the watershed and downstream?

Question 9: How do you spread the fertilizer on my lawn? If you use equipment, how often are they maintained and calibrated to make sure you are applying the right amount?

Question 10: How close do you apply fertilizers to environmentally sensitive areas (ponds, grassy swales, rain gardens, ditches, bioswales, bare dirt, and storm drains)? 15 feet is a good distance.

Question 11: How do you store your fertilizer in your trucks between job sites, and how do you store the fertilizer at your company? Do you make sure it is contained at all times?

Question 12: What is the fertilizer application rate you will use on my lawn? How many pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn will you apply for the year?

Question 13: Do you know what type of grass I have and is it a cool-weather or warm-weather species? Does it matter what kind of grass species I have when it comes to fertilizing?

Question 14: Do you use a drop-cloth or tarp to fill up your fertilizer spreader? How do you prevent spilling fertilizer on the ground?

Question 15: How short will you cut my grass? I heard that 3” is a recommended length.

Question 16: Do you plan to use soil amendments like manure, compost, or other organic materials? If you do, please make sure these materials also do not end up in the storm drain.

Question 17: Will you aerate my lawn this year? I prefer having it done at least once every two years in the fall or spring.

Question 18: Will you evaluate turf areas for sparse and bare patches and reseed/overseed those areas? Do you fertilize bare ground? Bare soil is a source of phosphorus runoff when it rains.

Overall Question: Do you follow the well-known 4R Principles of Nutrient Stewardship & Management: **Right Product, Right Rate, Right Time, and Right Place?**

Colorado Phosphorus-Free Lawn Fertilizer Coalition

Phosphorus-Free Lawn Fertilizer Initiative Supported by:

