

CONSUMER

INFORMATION SHEET

CIS-1

05/05/09

You and The Chesapeake Bay

LAWN CARE

Lime It, Don't Fertilize It.

~ Sabine Harvey, Extension Program Assistant, Horticulture, Kent County Extension

Unless you are growing Zoysia grass or Bermuda grass, **Spring is NOT the best time to fertilize your lawn.** The University of Maryland recommends that you do not fertilize your lawn in the Spring at all, unless your turf is weak and thin. Even then, the recommendation is to apply NO MORE than 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet of lawn before the end of May. If a home owner applied what fertilizer companies tell us to do, we would apply about 1.75 lbs. of Nitrogen per 1000 square feet by the month of June. **THAT IS THREE TIMES MORE THAN THE RECOMMENDED AMOUNT!**

Fescues and bluegrass that are over-fertilized are more prone to insect damage and diseases, and they are less able to withstand drought during the summer; not to mention the excess run-off that this much nitrogen creates or the endless mowing that will be required (which in and of itself is a major source of air pollution).

To maintain a healthy lawn, **it is more important that you test your soil and maintain the proper pH.** Our turf is happiest and most capable of absorbing nutrients when the pH is between 6.0 and 6.8. Our soils tend to have a low pH which will PREVENT the grass from absorbing phosphorus (which stimulates root growth), potassium (which increases plant vigor and disease resistance) and magnesium (which helps with photosynthesis). If you were to fertilize your lawn and the pH is too low, the grass would NOT BE ABLE to absorb those nutrients. **All you are doing is spending a lot of money and creating a lot of runoff.**

A soil test will tell you whether you need to raise your pH by applying LIME. Lime is available at local home and garden centers and can easily be applied with a spreader.

For \$10 you can have your soil tested and get the proper recommendations about what to apply to your turf. **Soil test kits are available at the Extension Office.**

As for nitrogen: Start by leaving grass clippings on your lawn. Grass clippings will return nutrients to the soil, it will save you the work of collecting them and filling up our landfills AND, if you are applying fertilizer in the Fall, you can reduce that amount by 25% which will save you money.

So, have your soil tested, apply lime when necessary, leave your grass clippings on your lawn, **create a sustainable yard and SAVE YOURSELF A BUNDLE OF MONEY AND TIME.**

Email: kent@umd.edu ♦ Web: www.kent.umd.edu

Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot Extension, 709 Morgnec Rd., Ste. #202, Chestertown, MD 21620 ♦ 410-778-1661 ♦ Fax: 410-778-9075



Photo by Wayne Gilchrest

Keeping the Bay Blue

YOUR LAWN

- Lime It, Don't Fertilize It.
- Spring is not the time to fertilize.
- Test your soil. We have kits.
- Maintain proper pH. Low pH nutrients will run off.
- Grass clippings are nitrogen.
- Don't waste your \$\$\$\$ and time.
- See www.kent.umd.edu or call 410-778-1661.

YOUR BEST SOURCE FOR RESEARCH - BASED INFO.

Shannon Dill , Talbot County Extension
John Hall, Kent County Extension
Jenny Rhodes, Queen Anne's Extension

