

Decide to use

## Florida-friendly lawn and garden practices today



and you can make a positive difference in your community.

Fertilizers run off lawns into local springs, streams, lakes and rivers, and, ultimately, into the Gulf of Mexico.

The resulting pollution harms our waterways and the plants and animals that depend on our sparkling water for survival.

Join the community effort to keep our coastal waters clean. It's easy. Here's how.



**Use fertilizers sparingly to reduce nitrate levels.** More is not necessarily better. Read and follow all instructions. Excess fertilizer washing off lawns is a major source of stormwater pollution.



**Do not fertilize when storm events are forecast.** This will reduce the level of nutrients washing into our water systems.



**Select slow-release fertilizers.** They are kinder to the environment and they are more cost effective. Nitrates from slow-release sources are more likely to be used by plants and less likely to leach out or wash away in stormwater runoff.

Your efforts will help reduce groundwater nitrate levels now and for the future. At the same time, you will be doing your part to preserve the springs, lakes, rivers, bays and wildlife—the things that brought you to Florida's west central coast.

For more information about ways to protect our water, contact the Southwest Florida Water Management District—the agency responsible for managing your water resources.

Call 1-800-423-1476, ext. 4612, or visit our Web site at [www.swfwmd.state.fl.us](http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us).

Fertilizer Facts extracted from "*The Florida Yardstick Workbook*" produced by the University of Florida, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.



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# Fertilizer Facts



Fertilizer is not plant food. Food for plants comes from the sugars the plant makes through photosynthesis. Fertilizer nutrients are used in this process, but a lawn or plant growing poorly in too much shade will not grow better if fertilized.



The truth about “100 percent organic” is that it often refers only to the nitrogen in the bag. Furthermore, the nitrogen can be derived from natural products, such as manure, or it can be from synthetic chemicals, such as urea. Read the label to determine where the “organic” nitrogen is coming from.



Make fertilizer selections based on need. Many fertilizers contain a number of plant nutrients, even though only one or two may be needed. What plant response do you want? Greener growth? More flowers or fruits? Decide which nutrients will give you what you want and then buy only those.



When fertilizer nutrients are in “slow-release” forms, they are available to plants over a longer period of time and less nutrients are wasted or lost as pollutants. Look for these terms on the product or fertilizer bag:



Time-released, slow-release or controlled-release.



Water insoluble nitrogen, activated sludge, sulfur-coated urea (SCU), Isobutylidenediurea (IBDU), Ureaform (UF), Nitroform, or polymer-, plastic-, or resin-coated urea.

Remember to fertilize only when needed to maintain the health of lawns and plants. Do not exceed the rate of 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per application.

For local information, contact: