

The destructive effects of improper fertilization ó

The devastating effects of improper fertilization are evident on the waters of Southwest Florida. Over-fertilization damages ecosystems throughout Florida, creating harmful algae blooms which suffocate and poison the creatures living in the water.



Fertilizing tips ó

- Fertilizers containing nitrogen and/or phosphorus cannot be used during the rainy season, June 1 through September 30.
- Fertilizer may not be applied within 10 feet of a water body, seawall or wetland.
- Fertilizer is not allowed on impervious surfaces such as roads, driveways and sidewalks.
- Deflector shields are required on spreaders to prevent fertilizer from being spread into water body buffers and impervious surfaces.
- Grass clippings and vegetative trimmings may not be swept or blown into ditches, drains, water bodies, onto roads or sidewalks.

Improper application of fertilizers such as using more than recommended amounts or applying the wrong formulas at certain times of the year, has come back to bite us. When combined with rains and run-off, these nutrients are redirected from our lawns and gardens and feed harmful aquatic algae that threatens our quality of life and our economy.

How Can I Prevent Water Pollution?

Did you know that in very heavy rains, some water standing in streets or swales is part of the flood control design plan and is expected? Your neighborhood lake's water level may seem to rise alarmingly, but that's not likely to last. If the system in your neighborhood is working properly, levels will return to normal soon after the rain has stopped. A heavier, more widespread and longer-lasting storm will require more time for local, secondary and regional systems to absorb the excess water. Because these flood control systems are connected, what's happening upstream or downstream from your neighborhood also has an impact.

Things Residents Can Do to Help

Water quality starts at home. Water quality affects us all; our health, quality of life, property values. The health of our waters is important to our local economy because local residents, visitors and fish, dive, visit the beaches, and eat the seafood. Poor water quality has a negative impact on all of these activities, and can even damage our health under severe conditions. Everyday activities impact our water resources; those impacts increase as our population increases.

Good water quality first comes from how we manage our day-to-day lives and then how we manage our stormwater run-off as a community. It is far more expensive to take pollutants out of water than it is to prevent pollution in the first place. **Prevention is the key!**

- **Lawn Care Tips**

- Do not apply any fertilizer before a rain event - before it can be absorbed, it can run off into waterways. Now the waterways are being fertilized.
- Mow tall. Set your mower deck at 3 inches.
- Keep grass clippings on the lawn; clippings act as a natural fertilizer and should be kept out of our stormwater systems.
- Consider mowing less in the dry season. Once per month may be adequate.

- **Only Rain Down the Storm Drain!**

- Never put any waste down a storm drain. This includes fertilizer, herbicides, motor oil, paints, grass, dirt and pet waste.