

Are there any instances when I can apply phosphorus?

The general rule in the Michigan Fertilizer Law is that no phosphorus fertilizer may be applied on lawns. However, there are a few exceptions:

- Phosphorus applications for agriculture, gardens, trees and shrubs are not included.
- Phosphorus may be applied at specified rates* under the following instances:
 - When a soil test or plant tissue test indicates phosphorus is needed;
 - For new turf establishment using seed or sod;
 - With fertilizers containing biosolids, manure or a manipulated manure (composted manure). The application rate is limited to 0.25 pounds of phosphorus per 1,000 square feet;
 - On golf courses whose manager(s) have completed a MDARD approved training course.



* These application rates are available at:
www.BePhosphorusSmart.msu.edu

Where can I get my soil tested?

Most Michigan soils have adequate phosphorus levels and do not require continual applications of phosphorus. Before fertilizing, conduct a soil test to determine whether your lawn needs phosphorus. Instructions and test kits are available through Michigan State University Extension by going to:

www.msusoiltest.com

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

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Home Lawn and Vegetable Soil Test Mailer

All materials and instructions included — no postage necessary!

This kit includes everything you need to send your lawn or vegetable soil to the Michigan State University Soil and Plant Nutrient Laboratory for testing. You'll receive an **electronic** response with personalized fertilizer and lime recommendations that will help you grow beautiful, healthy plants and **protect the environment**.

Where can I find phosphorus-free fertilizers?

A majority of garden centers, hardware stores, and large chain stores carry phosphorus free lawn fertilizers.

Additional Information

Be Phosphorus Smart!



www.BePhosphorusSmart.msu.edu

Help Protect and Preserve Water Quality

Use Phosphorus Free Fertilizer

Beginning January 1, 2012, Michigan law restricts phosphorus fertilizer applications on lawns.



Michigan Department of AGRICULTURE & Rural Development

www.michigan.gov/mda-fertilizer

Protecting Water Quality

Phosphorus is a naturally occurring essential nutrient for plant and animal growth. It is also a primary water quality concern in Michigan. When excess phosphorus is applied on land, it may run into nearby lakes, rivers and streams. This runoff can lead to increased algae and aquatic plant growth which can have negative effects on water quality, fisheries, recreation, and property values. By restricting unnecessary phosphorus applications, the phosphorus law will help maintain and protect Michigan's vast water resources.



Phosphorus runoff can have negative effects on water quality, fisheries and recreation. A vegetative buffer, as seen above, is one way to reduce these effects.

Turf food bag illustration and "sweep it up!" photo provided by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Dakota County, Minnesota

The Phosphorus Law

Michigan Fertilizer Law (1994 PA 451, Part 85, Fertilizers) restricts the use of phosphorus fertilizers on residential and commercial lawns, including athletic fields and golf courses statewide. Both homeowners and commercial applicators must follow the phosphorus application restrictions.



What fertilizers do I use?

Look for lawn fertilizers with zero phosphorus in them. On the bag or box of fertilizer is a row of three numbers. These numbers indicate the amount of total nitrogen (N), available phosphate (P_2O_5) and soluble potash (K_2O) in the particular product. The middle number is available phosphate and should read "0."

Clean Up and Avoid Water

- Fertilizer cannot be applied to frozen soil or soil saturated with water.
- Any fertilizer released onto a hard surface, such as a sidewalk or driveway, must be cleaned up promptly.
- Maintain at least a 15' application buffer from surface water (lake, river, stream).
- If a spreader guard, deflector shield, or drop spreader is used, then maintain at least a 3' buffer.
- If a continuous natural vegetative buffer separates the turf and surface water, then maintain at least a 10' buffer from the water.



Sweep it up! Fertilizer and clippings left on streets and sidewalks can be a major contributor to phosphorus loads in lakes and rivers.



New Michigan Fertilizer Legislation Restricts Phosphorus Applications on Turf

Beginning **January 1, 2012**, phosphorus fertilizer applications are restricted on residential and commercial lawns in Michigan, including athletic fields and golf courses statewide. This includes applications by both homeowners and commercial applicators.

The general rule in [Public Act 299 of 2010](#) (Act 299) is no phosphorus fertilizer may be applied on residential or commercial lawns, unless it meets an exemption. The sale of phosphorus fertilizers in the marketplace is not impacted. Phosphorus applications for agriculture, gardens, trees, and shrubs are exempted; the restrictions are identified below.

Act 299 Highlights:

- Starting January 1, 2012, a person shall not apply any fertilizer with available phosphate (P₂O₅) to turf. Available phosphate (P₂O₅) may be applied at **specified rates** under the following instances:
 - When a soil test or plant tissue test indicates phosphorus is needed;
 - For new turf establishment using seed or sod;
 - A finished sewage sludge (biosolid), organic manure or a manipulated manure (like compost). The application rate is limited to 0.25 pounds of phosphorus per 1,000 square feet.
 - On golf courses whose manager(s) have completed a Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) approved training program.
- [Local phosphorus fertilizer ordinances](#) in existence before December 16, 2010 are grandfathered.
- Fertilizer cannot be applied to frozen soil or soil saturated with water.
- Any fertilizer released onto a hard surface, such as a sidewalk or driveway must be cleaned up promptly.
- The other phosphorus provisions in Act 299 include new definitions, setbacks from surface water, \$50 civil fines and outreach information.

Additional Information

Michigan State University's [Be Phosphorus Smart](#) program

[Homeowner Brochure – Use Phosphorus Free Fertilizer](#)

[Recent Phosphorus Newsletter Article](#) – Includes information about the legislation
[MSU Soil Testing Lab Recommendations for Phosphorus Applications to Turfgrass](#)

[Senate Bill 648](#) - Proposed amendments to Act 299 were introduced in September 2011

Contact:

April Hunt, Feed and Fertilizer Manager, (517) 284-5644