How to Develop A Lawn Fertilization Program

Beautiful lawns are planned and created. A good lawn fertilization program is an essential part of every great looking lawn. This page will give you the basic information you need to develop a fertility program.

Almost all lawn fertilization programs are based on the Nitrogen (N) element. This is because nitrogen is the nutrient consumed by grasses in the greatest amounts. Furthermore, each grass type has a maximum amount of N that can safely be applied per growing season.

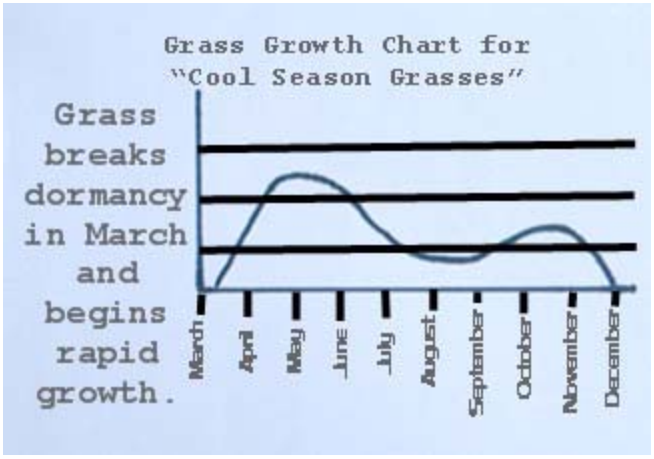
Therefore, the secret to developing a good fertilizer program can be divided into two parts.

(1) The first part is in knowing how much N your grass needs per year and then dividing that amount over the growing season.

(2) The second part is in knowing the correct amounts to apply during the season. For cool season grasses, it is not equally divided. Too much N at the wrong time of year can harm the grass and also encourage diseases and insect problems. Too little N, regardless of grass type, can hinder photosynthesis and rob the plant of needed carbohydrates.

Lawn fertilization for cool season grasses

Cool season grasses break dormancy in early spring and begin rapid growth. Grass growth slows in late spring and levels out in summer. Growth begins again in fall, but at a much slower rate. In the fall, most of the grass' energy is focused on root growth and carbohydrate storage. Even after the grass stops growing in late fall, the grass is still very active until soil temperatures reach into the thirties.

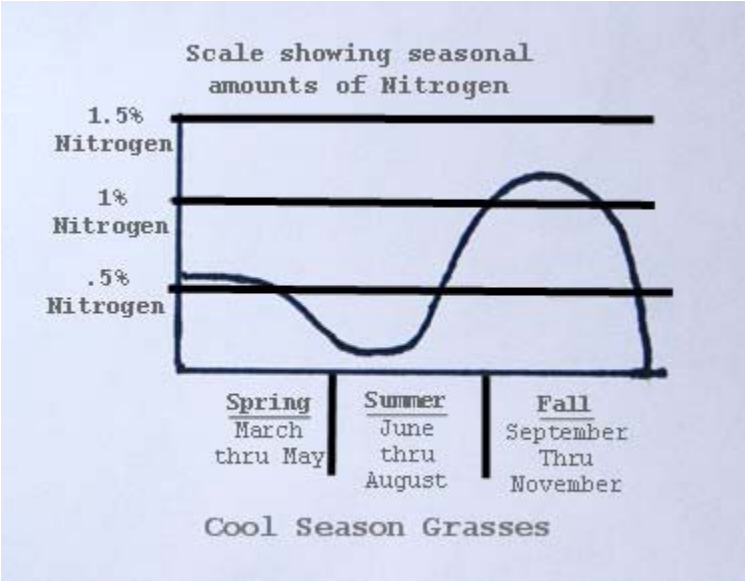


Considering grass growth in lawn fertilization

A lawn fertilization program takes into consideration what the grass is doing. In **early spring**, grass is programmed to use carbohydrates produced in the previous fall to break dormancy and begin growth. The lawn fertilization goal in spring is to apply just enough nitrogen to keep grass functioning properly and from becoming chlorotic.

In the **summer**, especially in the warmer climates, cool season grasses struggle and easily become stressed. Too much nitrogen forces the grass to grow when it cannot support it. The goal is to provide enough nitrogen to prevent yellowing (chlorosis). Organic fertilizers excel

in summer. They provide the needed N without burning, as well as, providing organic matter to promote a healthy population of soil microorganisms.



The **fall** lawn fertilization strategy is important. This is when the largest amount of N is applied. Grass is switching from leaf growth production to root growth and carbohydrate storage. This will continue until the soil temperatures reach into the 30's. The same amount of photosynthesis is going on, but instead of blade growth, it is focusing more on root growth and energy storage. The grass is able to handle higher levels of N than it could earlier in the year. In fact, the highest amount of N is applied after the last mowing of the year. Below are some popular grass types and their annual nitrogen needs.

Nitrogen fertilizer application amounts

The list below contain the annual nitrogen requirements of a few popular cool season grass types.
All Nitrogen requirement are for "pounds of Nitrogen per 1000 sq.ft. per year."

- Kentucky bluegrass 4-5 lbs N
- Tall Fescue 3-5 lbs N
- Fine Fescue 1-2 lbs N
- Ryegrass 4-5 lbs N

Application Timing.....lbs Nitrogen 1000/sq.ft.
Program for high maintenance, high activity turf

- March-April..... .5 to .75 lbs Nitrogen
- May-June..... .5 to .75 lbs Nitrogen
- June-July.....Organic Fertilizer
- August-September..... .75 to 1.0 lbs Nitrogen
- September-October..... 1.0 lbs Nitrogen
- October-November..... 1.0 to 1.5 lbs Nitrogen

These are only guidelines and are based on professional fertility programs for high maintenance turf. All grasses have a high and low nitrogen requirement. Your lawn may do just fine on a lower fertility program.

Application Timing.....lbs Nitrogen 1000/sq.ft.
Program for low maintenance turf

- March-April..... .5 to .75 lbs Nitrogen.
- June-July..... Organic Fertilizer
- September..... .75 to 1.0 lbs Nitrogen
- October-November..... 1.0 to 1.5 lbs Nitrogen

Obviously, the fine fescues can not take this much Nitrogen. A lawn fertilization program for fine fescue would be a spring and fall fertilizer application and organic fertilizer in summer.

The first application of the year should include a pre-emergent for crabgrass, especially if it has been a problem before.

Your grass needs specific levels of nitrogen regardless whether you are using an organic or inorganic fertilizer. If you are interested in an organic program, click here first for a better understanding of Organic Lawn Fertilizer. http://www.lawn-care-academy.com/organic-lawn-fertilizer.html