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Fertilizers – What you Need to Feed Your Lawn

By L. J. Bruton

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Just like humans need food, water and shelter to survive, lawns depend on certain elements to live, sixteen to be exact. Most of these elements are already found naturally in the environment, but several others need to be added to your lawn. Adding fertilizer with these three elements, nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus, does the job.

Before you run out to the store to purchase a complete fertilizer, or, one that contains all three, it is important to understand why your lawn's livelihood depends on it.

Nitrogen– This is possibly the most important element your lawn needs. It makes the grass grow and gives it its green color. It will also allow for more density, thick shoots, and sturdy growth, thus creating an environment that will naturally fight off pests and bugs.

Potassium– Since you can't toss bananas in your yard, your best bet for this mineral is to use fertilizer! Potassium enhances your lawn's ability to resist disease, drought, wear and cold weather.

Phosphorus– This is used to encourage strong grass root growth.

Most fertilizers you will find in your local home and garden stores will contain all three of these elements. However, there are different amounts of each. This is reflected in a three-digit number, such as 30-10-10, which tells the percentage of each in this order: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. These blends will serve different purposes. For instance, more potassium in blends are good for winterization. The factors you need to consider are grass type, climate, time of season and soil type. Once you know what your needs are, you will be able to determine the right combination of these elements. An additional way to scan your needs is determine the current levels of these nutrients in your soil. This can be done through a simple pH test.

In addition to variation in percentages of the key elements, there are also different types of fertilizers to consider. There are four major options that will greet you in the fertilizer aisle: Granular (slow and fast-release), Liquid, Synthetic and Organic.

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Granular fertilizers are perhaps the most popular, probably due to their ease in use and duration. Since these are dry, they are much easier to spread. Granular fertilizers can come in a slow time–release formula, which provides fertilization over two to six months.

This is an efficient choice for homeowners, as it will not need another application for months to come. Granular is also available in fast–release, and although applied in the same manner, the nutrients are released quicker and work better in cold weather. This method also costs less. However, grass burn can occur and there will be a greater need for watering.

Liquid fertilizers are just as the name says– in liquid form. These are applied by attaching a hose and nozzle to a spray bottle. The contents of the bottle are usually in concentrated form, thus the need to

mix with the water. If you can use a hose, this is an easy method, more so than spreading granular around the yard. Also, since this a liquid, nutrients are available immediately to the roots of your vegetation. Herbicides can also be added or applied during this treatment. But, since the results are immediate, applications will have to be repeated more often than granular, and since liquid is more expensive to begin with, it can be more costly.

Synthetic fertilizers are usually manufactured chemically, hence being called synthetic. These engineered fertilizers offer immediate release of nutrients, and make lawns green. They simply penetrate the soil quicker. However, they are not natural, and many argue that lawns should be treated naturally. Applications of synthetic fertilizer needs to be redone more often, as results don't last as long. They can also burn your lawn if not applied in a proper manner.

Finally, organic fertilizers are made from once living organisms and their bi–products. These are applied to the lawn by spreaders, rakes and even by hand. Since this a totally natural fertilizer, the organics tend to break down slow when releasing nitrogen. They will improve the texture and density of your lawn, especially when added to soil or lakebed sand. There are some drawbacks however, including a foul smell in the case of manures. Also, these soils tend to have more nitrogen than other elements.

In summary, when choosing a fertilizer, you need to consider many things: The current nutrition of your lawn, how much money you want to spend, how much labor you want to invest in application– initial and repeats, as well as personal preference. But with the spurt in technology, choices keep growing as more combinations are being introduced.

For hundreds of other tips for creating your own perfect lawn, be sure to visit:

Lawn Care Maintenance For Mere Mortals

By Dennis Conner

Though everyone likes to see their lawn in an enviable condition few are aware of the basics of lawn preparation and maintenance. Planting the seeds, spraying for the weeds, and watering your lawn, all

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look simple but proper maintenance of a good lawn is no simple task. To some, lawn care is serious business – reading every bit of the literature that they come across and going for a serious lawn building exercise that may make this interesting past time a rudimentary daily routine.

Lawn care and maintenance is more of an enjoyable past time rather than a core activity. Consider these basics of healthy lawn care. While talking about lawns the first thing to consider is mowing. The frequency of mowing, the growth of the grass, and the lawn mowers are all integral part in deciding a good mowing habit. Quite often small opening up of the soil leaving more space for the lawn to breathe would accelerate healthy growth of the grass. The lawn is to be sufficiently watered especially during large dry spells of summer to sustain the growth of the grass. Lawns need a good supplement of a proper mix of fertilizers with adequate nitrogen phosphate and potash.

If we go a bit technical, lawns require more than one annual feed. The feed for the summer need contain a nitrogen rich fertilizer where as an autumn feed should be rich in phosphate and potash with an adequate supplement of worm killers and disease resistance. For watering, the coolest time of the day, either in the morning or in the evening is advisable, the frequency being once a week.

A good lawn care management program includes proper weed control besides appropriate mowing and application of fertilizers. The basic mowing lesson includes use of sharp blades and regular mowing from March to October. Care should be taken not to move the mower backwards and forwards. In the case of new lawns, the first thing to be considered is to prepare a smooth and level ground by a tractor and box blade. As regards sowing the seeds they need spread in two directions preferably with a rotary spreader. The seeds are to be planted around thirty days in advance. Depending upon the temperature the seed suitable for hot season or for the cold spell may be selected. A healthy lawn requires more or less an inch of water during a week. Further aerating in spring is considered best for the lawns. The recent trend in the lawn care is the use of the organic fertilizers. These are environmental friendly and harmless to the plants. Literature on organic fertilizers is plentiful on the market. The cost of the organic fertilizers is almost the same that of the chemical fertilizers but the benefit stays longer.

The type of lawn care depends on one's budget. One can afford to spend thousands of dollars should the lawn making is taken as a serious hobby. If, on the other, hand one needs a well maintained lawn to spend a few hours with family and friends the same may not cost much.

The author is a regular contributor to Everything Lawns

where

additional information about lawn care and lawn care products is available.



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