



Hernando County, Florida Board of County Commissioners

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Media Release

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Fertilizer ordinance in effect for Hernando County

(Hernando County, FL)— A fertilizer ordinance is in effect for Hernando County. It regulates how, where and when fertilizers can be applied to plants and grass. The ordinance includes a limited application season from January 1 through March 31 of each year. During this time period, only professional applicators who are trained, certified and registered according to the terms of the ordinance may apply fertilizer. The only forms of nitrogen fertilizer that may be applied during this period are those that are labeled as slow- or controlled-release. The applicator must be able to verify the fertilizer product used and provide the verification upon request. In addition, professional applicators must register with Hernando County by June 1, 2014.

The water quality of Weeki Wachee Springs and the Weeki Wachee River has been listed as "verified impaired due to nutrients" by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). Studies conducted by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and FDEP have determined that the primary cause of nitrogen comes from inappropriate fertilizer use. When applied incorrectly, excess nutrients wash off lawns into neighboring water bodies causing excessive algae growth and stressing aquatic insects, amphibians and fish.

Here are tips on how residents can encourage compliance to the fertilizer ordinance:

- Do not fertilize your lawn from Jan. 1 through March 31 unless you hire a certified landscape professional.
- Ask your fertilizer professional if he or she has a certificate of training through the Green Industries—Best Management Practices Program. The ordinance requires a professional applicator to have that certificate of training by Jan. 1, 2014. In addition, he or she must register with the county by June 14, 2014.
- Watch the weather and don't fertilize when the National Weather Service calls for a heavy rain, flood, tropical storm or hurricane watch or warning or when the soil is still saturated.
- Hold off fertilizing new plants, turf seeding or sod until at least 30 days after planting.
- Do not fertilize within 10 feet of a water body without using a deflector shield, drop spreader or liquid applicator with a visible and sharply defined edge. It is recommended to use plants that don't require fertilizer for these areas.
- Immediately clean up fertilizer that spills on your driveway, sidewalk or street. Never allow fertilizer, grass clippings, pet waste, plant debris, gasoline or oil to be washed, swept or blown off sidewalks or roadways into stormwater drains, ditches, canals, water bodies or wetlands.
- Follow the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences best management practices for landscapes. For information, contact the Hernando County UF Extension office at (352) 754-4433 visit fyn.ifas.ufl.edu.

Important contact information:

- Call the Hernando County UF/IFAS Extension office at (352) 754-4433 for more information about the ordinance.
- Visit <http://extension.hernandocounty.us> to read the full ordinance. Search under

**HERNANDO COUNTY
FERTILIZER APPLICATION ORDINANCE
Homeowner Guidance Sheet**
Effective: November 14, 2013

The Hernando County Board of County Commissioners amended Chapter 28 and created article XII (Fertilizer Application Ordinance) to regulate the use of fertilizers containing nitrogen and/or phosphorus on turf and/or landscape plants within Hernando County. The selected guidelines below were compiled to help homeowners understand the new rules.

- **General Prohibited Fertilizer Application Periods:**
 - When the National Weather Service has a flood, tropical storm or hurricane watch or warning in effect.
 - When heavy rain is occurring, imminent or forecast by the National Weather Service.
 - Prior to seeding or sodding a site and for the first 30 days after.

- **Plant Dormancy Season Fertilizing Prohibition: January 1 through March 31**
 - Only professional applicators who are trained, certified and registered according to the terms of the ordinance shall apply fertilizer during this period and only slow- or controlled-release fertilizer shall be applied.
 - Professional applicators must be registered with the county by June 1, 2014.
 - The applicator shall maintain verification of the product used and must provide verification upon request.

- **Creation of Fertilizer-Free Zones:**
 - No fertilizer shall be applied within 10 feet of the top of bank of any spring, pond, stream, watercourse, lake, canal or wetland.
 - No fertilizer shall be applied within a minimum of three feet from the top of a seawall unless one of the following is used: deflector shield, drop spreader or liquid applicator with a visible and sharply defined edge.
 - Fertilization may be applied on new plant or turf materials in this zone once beginning 30 days after planting, if it is needed to establish the plants.
 - No mowed or cut plant material may be deposited on or left remaining in this zone or deposited in the water.

- **Follow the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Recommendations:**
 - For information on fertilization of turf, landscape plants, vegetable gardens, fruit trees and shrubs or to order a soil test to determine soil deficiencies, contact the Hernando County UF Extension office at (352) 754-4433 or visit: <http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/>.
 - Spreader deflector shields are required when using a rotary (broadcast) spreader to deflect fertilizer away from all impervious surfaces, Fertilizer-Free Zones and water bodies, including wetlands.
 - Care must be taken so no fertilizer is applied, spilled or in anyway deposited on any impervious surfaces. If such spillage occurs, intentionally or accidentally, as much as possible shall be immediately removed and re-containerized or applied to turf.
 - No fertilizer, grass clippings, vegetative material, and/or vegetative debris shall be washed, swept or blown off impervious surfaces into stormwater drains, ditches, conveyances, or water bodies, wetlands, sidewalks or roadways.
 - Fertilizer shall not be applied to saturated soils or in saturated soil conditions.