

WEEKLY NEWS COLUMN
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FERTILIZER CAN BE TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

Spring has sprung. If you're dreaming of a lush summer lawn, the months leading up to summer are the best time to develop a lawn care plan and begin implementing it.

A healthy lawn adds value to your home and helps the environment. Healthy lawns filter out air pollution, slow the movement of chemicals and fertilizers into surface water, prevent soil erosion and release oxygen. Most lawns require some type of fertilizer annually to keep them healthy.

Spring green up usually has homeowners ready to begin fertilizing to achieve their goal of a beautiful lawn. But, your soil may already have enough nutrients to support plant growth. Knowing what your lawn needs can not only help you save time and money, but also help the environment by not applying excess. While the goal of fertilizing is to prevent problems with your lawn, providing excessing nutrients leads to pest problems and excessive plant growth. Using too much fertilizer also adds to pollution in Kansas rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands. Under fertilizing your lawn is not a good option, either, as it leads to thin grass or weeds which allow soil to erode.

Lawn fertilizer contains three main ingredients: nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P) and potassium (K). Lawns generally require more nitrogen and phosphorous than potassium.

How do you know when enough is enough? Your best option is to have your soil tested by a soil testing laboratory to determine if additional nutrients are needed for plant growth. You can do this through your local K-State Research and Extension Office located in the east wing of the Cowley County Courthouse in Winfield.

When is the best time to fertilize? Cool season lawns such as fescue and bluegrass should be fertilized in September and November, with an optional application in May. Warm season grasses like bermudagrass and zoysiagrass should be fertilized between May and August.

K-State Research and Extension provides resources including soil testing and information about how and when to fertilize. For more information or additional gardening resources, contact the Cowley County Extension Office 221-5450, 441-4565.

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