

GREEN & CLEAN



1

KNOW WHAT TYPE OF LAWN YOU HAVE.

Cool-season lawns stay green through winter and grow only in spring and fall. This type of grass often turns brown in summer without irrigation. Warm-season lawns turn brown in winter and grow in late spring and summer. Apply fertilizer *only when your lawn is actively growing*. Never apply fertilizer before your lawn has greened up in spring or after it has turned brown in winter.

2

TEST YOUR SOIL.

Soil testing indicates how much fertilizer, if any, your lawn needs. Contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension office for a soil test kit. An extension agent can help you interpret your test results.

3

PROPERLY FERTILIZE YOUR LAWN.

A dense stand of grass reduces runoff, prevents erosion and retains nutrients. If your lawn is flat, older than 10 years, has dense vegetation, and you're happy with how it looks, you probably don't need to fertilize. But proper and timely fertilization can be good for your lawn. Try reducing the application rates suggested on the fertilizer bag by a third or half and monitor your lawn's response. The full rate isn't always needed to get the expected results. Whatever you decide, *don't exceed 0.9 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in a single application*.

4

MAXIMIZE THE USE OF SLOW-RELEASE NITROGEN FERTILIZER.

If your yard needs fertilizer, use a slow-release nitrogen fertilizer to ensure the lawn has nitrogen available when it needs it. Shop for fertilizer labeled *slow-release nitrogen*, *water insoluble nitrogen* or *"WIN."*

5

SET MOWER HEIGHT TO AT LEAST 3 INCHES.

Mow your lawn 3 inches or higher (2 inches or higher for some warm-season grasses). Maintaining taller grass produces a deeper, more extensive root system that, in turn, increases nutrient uptake and reduces runoff. Deeper roots reduce the need for supplemental irrigation during drought, while taller grass suppresses weeds and creates a denser lawn.

6

RETAIN CLIPPINGS AND MULCHED LEAVES ON YOUR LAWN.

Lawn clippings decompose quickly, and the added organic matter improves water infiltration and soil health.

7

IMMEDIATELY SWEEP EXCESS FERTILIZER FROM PAVED SURFACES ONTO THE LAWN.

Rotary spreaders can broadcast fertilizer onto the driveway, sidewalk or street. If not removed, the fertilizer will wash off when it rains and end up in a storm drain and eventually in rivers, lakes or streams.

8

DON'T APPLY FERTILIZER WITHIN 15 FEET OF A WATER FEATURE.

Fertilizer's most likely to run off from lawn areas bordering streams, shorelines and drainage ditches. To protect water from nutrient pollution, buffer these areas with native perennials or grass that's not often mowed or fertilized.

9

HELP STORMWATER INFILTRATE.

Stormwater runoff is the main way nutrients are transported from your lawn to surface waters. Help your grass soak up rainwater by aerating and topdressing with a quarter inch of compost once or twice per year while your grass is actively growing. Reduce runoff from your property by installing rain gardens, rain barrels and permeable pavers that improve soil porosity and infiltration capability.

Contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension office or watershed organization if you have questions about these tips or need help implementing them.



FOLLOW THESE STEPS FOR A LUSH, GREEN LAWN THAT PROTECTS OUR WATERS FROM HARMFUL RUNOFF.



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THE HEALTH OF VIRGINIA'S WATERWAYS BEGINS IN YOUR BACKYARD.

- Excess fertilizer can run off your lawn when it rains and pollute rivers and streams. There are millions of lawns in Virginia — the pollution adds up!
- Pollution from nutrient runoff is the most severe problem facing local waterways. Runoff that carries excess nitrogen and phosphorus encourages algae growth and reduces water clarity, which stresses aquatic plant and animal life.
- Runoff from your lawn eventually reaches one of more than 3,000 creeks and rivers in Virginia.

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MORE WAYS TO BE GREEN & CLEAN

- Encourage your lawn-service company to participate in Virginia's Water Quality Agreement Program. The agreement demonstrates the company's commitment to responsible lawn care and clean water. Participating companies are listed at www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil-and-water/wqagree
- Consider a nutrient management plan for your yard. These plans are guides for how and when to fertilize, tailor-made for your yard. Contact your extension agent or watershed organization for assistance.
- View videos and fact sheets about lawn care at https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/tags.resource.html/pubs_ext_vt_edu:lawns

Mow cool-season grasses to a height of 3 inches, warm-season grasses to 2 inches.

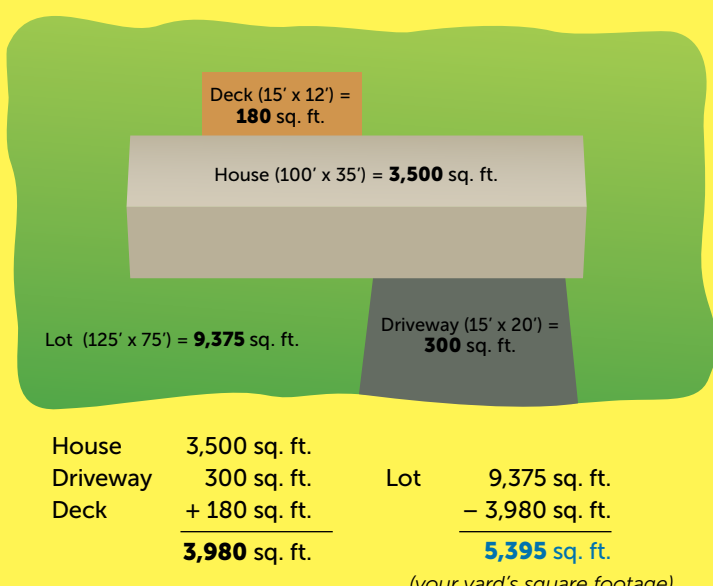


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YOUR YARD'S SQUARE FOOTAGE

To correctly apply soil amendments, such as lime, fertilizer or compost, you need to know your yard's square footage.

1. Calculate the total square footage of the house footprint, driveway, deck and areas that will not be fertilized the same way as the lawn. Multiply the width by the depth for each, then add these numbers together.
2. Calculate the square footage of your lot. Multiply the width by the depth.
3. Subtract the total square footage of unaffected areas from the square footage of your lot. This number is your yard's square footage.



APPLYING FERTILIZER

The amount of nitrogen you should apply depends on the time of year, your grass type and how your lawn's used. Remember, the more you fertilize, the more you'll have to mow. To determine how much slow-release nitrogen fertilizer your lawn needs, use the online calculator at www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil-and-water/fertcalc