

Fertilizer Laws

New Castle Residents Need to Know

New Hampshire Law: RSA 431

This law, enacted in 2014, affects retail lawn fertilizer labeling and instructions.

- Retail fertilizer bags are to be labeled with a code (ex: 25-0-3) that indicates the percent of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (by weight) contained in the fertilizer
- When properly applied, fertilizer may not exceed .9 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. .2 pounds (22%) of that must be slow release nitrogen*.
- No retail lawn fertilizer may contain more than .67% available phosphate unless it is specifically intended for new lawns, seeding, or when a soil test indicates a phosphorus deficiency. There is still an application limit of 1 pound available phosphate per 1,000 square feet of lawn per year.

Town of New Castle

2014

- Fertilizer use (except Limestone) is prohibited within 25' of tidal wetlands and shoreline, or from the edge of freshwater wetlands.
- Fertilizer use beyond 25' must contain a minimum of 50% slow release nitrogen
- Fertilizer use beyond 25' may not contain more than 2% phosphorus



*Slow Release Fertilizer:

The benefits are that a small but steady supply of nitrogen is available to plants all season long, so its not apt to be limiting to growth. It allows maximum uptake and utilization of a smaller amount of the nutrient and less risk of leaching. (UNHCE, 2003)

New Castle Conservation Commission

Lavenger Creek Conservation Plan

The Lavenger Creek Salt Marsh is the largest and most pristine salt marsh found in New Castle. The NCCC created a "Plan" in 2015 to highlight the significant wetland and wildlife resources found here and to provide measures aimed at protecting the functions and values of this unique ecosystem. The "Plan" offers specific short and long term measures, guidelines and practices to ensure this wetland's survival. Guidelines include references for landscaping and permitted actions; these guidelines are important so that adverse hydrologic and water quality changes can be minimized to the marsh. Together the community can assist in protecting and enhancing the important functions of this rare wetland resource.



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TOWN OF NEW CASTLE

Lawn Care Information & Tips For a Better Environment



New Castle Conservation Commission
In Partnership With
Rockingham County Conservation District



Maintaining a Healthy Lawn & Protecting the Environment

Almost all areas devoted to lawns in the Town of New Castle are adjacent to a pond, wetland, or coastal shoreline. Lawn fertilizer contributes to non-point pollution of these waterways, which has several negative ecological impacts.

Residents should be aware of the environmental impact fertilizers have on ALL waterways as well as new local laws governing the use of lawn fertilizers.

Excess nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilizer initiate a process called eutrophication. This overabundance of nutrients fuels algae growth and subsequent algal bloom die-offs, which result in a lower oxygen content in the water. Aquatic organisms and habitats are harmed due to oxygen depletion.

In addition, too much nitrogen and phosphorus uptake in plants may weaken their immune system and hinder their ability to grow. It can also make them susceptible to the cold, a feature of New Hampshire winters.

Finally, excess nutrients in a waterway may degrade its recreational value. Algae growth may hinder swimming, and unsuitable habitat may reduce native fish populations and make fishing less enjoyable.

Read on for more information and lawn care tips.

What Can Land Owners Do?

- Know the size of your lawn and do not use more fertilizer than is necessary—READ THE LABELS!
- Get a soil test for your lawn before seeding and at least once every three years. This can be completed through the UNH Cooperative Extension
- Follow the recommendations provided by your soil test
- Return lawn clippings to the lawn— this may reduce the need to apply fertilizer by 50%
- Apply fertilizer at the right times:
 - Never before spring green-up
 - Never after October 1
 - Never before heavy rains are predicted
- Consider planting cover plants which require no fertilizer and no mowing

What Can Landscapers Do?

- Educate your clients about the importance and benefits of using best management practices on their lawns— especially in the use of slow release nitrogen
- Perform a site assessment before you begin work to set expectations about the improvement of the site, keeping in mind that a balance of lawn improvement and environmental responsibility must be maintained
- Note: Remember that anyone who is paid to apply fertilizer in New Hampshire is required to have a license from the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food (except municipality workers applying directly to a municipal property)



Salt Marsh Health

What Defines a Salt Marsh?

A salt marsh is a wetland that is flooded by seawater brought in by the tides. It typically contains many shallow pools and channels through which the tides move. Marsh grasses sit on top of peat (a spongy matrix of live roots, soil, and decomposing plant materials).

Why Are Salt Marshes Important?

Salt marshes provide habitat to many different species, and especially serve as a nursery for fish, insects, and amphibians. They also act as a natural buffer from tidal energy as grasses slow waves before they reach the shore. This protects the coastline from erosion and storm surges. They serve as important breeding grounds and provide significant habitats. Salt marshes are also enormous filters that remove pollutants from the water as well as excess sediments and nutrients (USEPA, 1993) .

What Is Hurting Salt Marshes?

Salt marshes are ecologically sensitive. Salt marshes were once dredged and developed without a thought. Wetland protection laws now limit such activities, but there are other factors stressing the marshes.

High nutrient loads burden salt marshes. When marsh grasses and other plants receive too much nitrogen, they have no need to grow their roots and rhizomes extensively. It is the roots of plants that provide most of the structural support for the channel beds and marshes. Nitrogen from fertilizer can result in the collapse of the marsh.

What Can Land Owners Do?

Manage lawns using the least amount of fertilizer as possible, and always within legal limits

Assist by minimize cutting and always plant natives

Salt marshes are also susceptible to invasive species, which out-compete native marsh grasses. Last year the RCCD spent two days cutting and removing 1/3 of an acre of *Phragmites* on Lavanger Creek Marsh. Watch changes at Lavanger Creek as new techniques are proposed to enhance the health of Lavanger Creek Marsh!