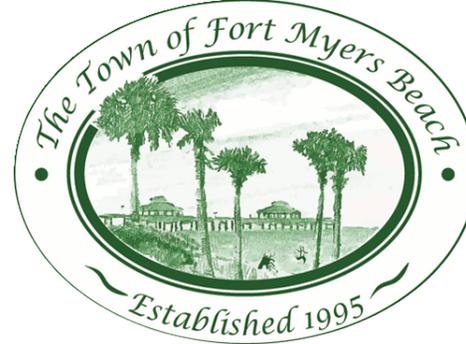


Town of Fort Myers Beach

Fertilizer Ordinance

What Property Owners Need to Know



On December 15, 2008, the Town Council of Fort Myers Beach passed an ordinance that regulates the usage of fertilizer by property owners and commercial operators. This ordinance will help protect the Gulf of Mexico and Estero Bay by reducing the amount of nutrients that enter the water from runoff, excessive or improper fertilizer application. Town staff may pursue enforcement for any persons found violating this ordinance after June 12, 2009. Here are the important provisions of this ordinance:

- Fertilizers containing nitrogen and/or phosphorus cannot be applied to lawns and/or landscape plants during the rainy season (June 1 – September 30).
- Fertilizer that contains more than 2% phosphorus cannot be applied to lawns and/or landscape plants.
- Fertilizer cannot contain more than 20% nitrogen with no less than 50% as slow release nitrogen.
- No more than one (1) pound of nitrogen can be applied per 1,000 square feet per application or more than four (4) pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year.
- Fertilizer cannot be applied to any area more than four (4) times in one year.
- Fertilizer cannot be applied to or spilled on impervious surfaces or any waterbody.
- Fertilizer cannot be applied within three feet (3') of any waterbody.
- Deflector shields are required when using any spreaders for broadcasting fertilizer and must be positioned to deflect fertilizer away from water bodies.
- Commercial applicators must be certified by Florida Green Industries and at least one certified employee must be onsite during application.

There are some exemptions from this ordinance. The exemptions are:

- For newly established lawns and landscape plants for the first 60 days following installation.
- Vegetable gardens or potted plants provided they are not within three (3) feet of a waterbody.
- Areas where soil tests confirm that phosphorous is less than ten (10) parts per million.
- Organic mulch, compost, or similar organic materials used to improve soil condition.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why is this fertilizer ordinance important?**
 - Wetland, estuarine, and marine systems are very sensitive to changes in nutrient levels. Increase in nutrient levels from human activities can result and exacerbate algal blooms, such as red drift algae and red tide. This ordinance will reduce the amount of nutrients that will enter the natural systems from Fort Myers Beach. Lee County, Charlotte County, Sarasota County, the City of Sanibel, the City of Fort Myers and the City of Naples have all implemented fertilizer ordinances as well.
- **Won't my lawn suffer without fertilizer during the summer?**
 - Not if the lawn is properly maintained during the rest of the year. Florida soils naturally contain high levels of phosphorus and nitrogen is naturally present in rainfall. Since Florida receives most of its rain during the summer, your lawn and landscaping receives adequate nitrogen during the summer, especially if slow release fertilizer is applied in the spring and again in the fall and/or winter.
- **Can I fertilize my palm trees during the summer?**
 - Yes- If the fertilizer does not contain nitrogen and/or phosphorus. Palm trees have unique nutritional requirements and most palm specific fertilizers contain nutrients such as magnesium, manganese, iron, or potassium. Only fertilizers containing nitrogen and/or phosphorus are regulated under this ordinance. Contact Lee County Extension Service for advice on palm tree care.
- **How do I know if fertilizer is slow release and where can I buy it?**
 - Look at the fertilizer bag label and find the amount of nitrogen that is "slow-release." Slow release fertilizers are becoming very common and can be found at most hardware and landscape supply stores.
- **How can I reduce the amount of fertilizer that I apply to my lawn?**
 - By developing your yard through the principles of Xeriscape and Florida Yards and Neighborhoods. Contact the South Florida Water Management District or the University of Florida Extension Service for more details.
- **How do I know if my landscaper is certified to apply fertilizers?**
 - Ask them to show you a certificate that they completed the Florida Green Industries training class. If a landscaper is found to be applying fertilizer without the training they could lose their certification. Hiring a non-certified landscaper shows little regard for the environmental that is so critical to your property value and your quality of life.

For more information on the Town of Fort Myers Beach Fertilizer Ordinance contact the Environmental Sciences Coordinator, **Keith Laakkonen at 765-0202, extension 136 or by e-mail at Keith@FortMyersBeachFL.gov

**For more information on the proper use of fertilizer contact the Lee County University of Florida extension office at (239) 285-2305.