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## Finally Time to Fertilize Your Lawn

Lawns have finally started to grow well enough to utilize fertilizer. Grass, shrubs, and trees need to be actively growing before fertilization. If plants are growing the roots are actively foraging for nutrients to sustain top growth. Therefore, growing plants have a much better chance of utilizing the nutrients; thus, preventing leaching of the fertilizers past the roots and into ground water.

Mostly because of poor application techniques and timing, homeowners are the worst polluter of the environment. In fact, lawn pollution is rampant in Florence. You are a lawn polluter if you do things to your lawn that damages the environment. You are not alone, things that you do to your lawn affects the environment of Pee Dee and the world.

If you don't use a slow-release fertilizer on your lawn, you are a lawn polluter. With a slow-release fertilizer the nutrients are slowly available to the plant as needed and less is leached (lost) into the groundwater. Normal fertilizers are quickly leached (lost) by a heavy rain. If it doesn't say "Slow Release" on the bag it is not. Also, centipede is a low maintenance grass and requires very little fertilization. Only use 3 to 4 lbs per 1000 square feet of a 16-4-8, 15-0-15, or 18-0-18 fertilizer on centipede.

If you don't sweep the fertilizer off your driveway and walkway, you are a lawn polluter. Without soil to hold the nutrients, they are washed quickly into the storm drains which ultimately empty into our creeks and rivers. Our drains do not go into a waste treatment plant but directly into surface water like Lynches River.

If you don't compost your lawn trimmings, you are a lawn polluter. Compost is an excellent source of nutrients and organic matter for all plants. Anything that once lived in your yard can be reincarnated through compost into a beautiful lawn. No use in filling the dump with things that can make your lawn the pride of the neighborhood.

If you unnecessarily or arbitrarily apply chemicals to your lawn without a specific control in mind, you are a lawn polluter. First, Identify the pest (insect or weed) to be controlled and select a cultural practice or chemical to control it. Secondly, read the label and follow the directions for application. If you have any questions about the chemical talk with a lawn professional. If not used properly, some products cannot only hurt the environment, but also kill your lawn. Also, it is too late to kill those spring (winter) weeds in your lawn. They have already produced seed for next years crop of weeds and will die soon.

To learn the specifics on lawn maintenance we have both free and for-sale publications at our office in the back of the Public Services Building on the corner of Third Loop and Irby. You may also visit our Home & Garden Information Center through our web site at [hgic.clemson.edu](http://hgic.clemson.edu). I may be contacted through our web site, [www.clemson.edu/florence](http://www.clemson.edu/florence) or my email address [amelton@clemson.edu](mailto:amelton@clemson.edu), or 661-4800.

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