

## Frequently Asked Questions for Professionals

### **Q. I apply fertilizer as part of my job. What training, certificate, license, etc am I required to have?**

**A.** Each fertilizer applicator must take the Green Industry Best Management Practices training. It is offered through the University of Florida Extension office. At the end of the training is a test each applicator must take and pass to receive their certificate. A copy of the certificate is required to apply for the Limited Commercial Fertilizer Applicator license. Each person applying fertilizer in Pinellas County must have this license by January 19, 2011. Contact [Pinellas County Extension](#) for the class schedule 727-582-2100 option #2 or take the class online at <https://eces.ifas.ufl.edu/gibmp>. After you receive your GIBMP certification, apply for the FDACS Limited Commercial Fertilizer Applicator license with this application: <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/onestop/forms/13677.pdf>

### **Q. I am an independent landscaper. I do not work for a big landscape company. Am I required to have the LCULCF mentioned above?**

**A.** Yes. Each person who applies fertilizer as part of a landscape service must have the LCULCF by January 19, 2011. Contact [Pinellas County Extension](#) for the class schedule or take the class online at <https://gibmp.ifas.ufl.edu>. After you receive your GIBMP certification, apply for the FDACS Limited Commercial Fertilizer Applicator license with this application: <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/onestop/forms/13677.pdf>

### **Q. What do I tell my customers who say their lawn is going to turn brown without regular fertilizer application?**

**A.** In Pinellas County soils are rich in phosphorous. There are extended release fertilizers available to provide nitrogen over a longer period of time. Micronutrients such as iron, magnesium, and potassium can be used to green-up lawns without the excess growth nitrogen provides. Additionally, compost based products are encouraged to improve soil quality.

### **Q. How do I know which fertilizer to use at what time of the year?**

**A.** Fertilizers with phosphorous (N-P-K) are not allowed unless you or your customer has obtained a soil test that indicates a phosphorous deficiency. The results of the soil test must be submitted to Pinellas County prior to phosphorous application. From October 1 – May 31 granular fertilizers must contain at least 50% slow release nitrogen. From June 1 - September 30 fertilizers with nitrogen or phosphorous are not allowed, this is the blackout period. During this period compost and micronutrient fertilizers (Fe, Mg, Mn, K) are allowed as needed.

### **Q. If the Fertilizer Ordinance says I cannot use fertilizer, why are the stores still selling it?**

**A.** Beginning June 1, 2011 there will be a retail sales ban of fertilizers containing nitrogen or phosphorous from June 1- September 30 each year. From October 1- May 31 you should use fertilizers with zero phosphorous and at least 50% slow release nitrogen. Fertilizers are labeled N-P-K (nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium). The middle number must be zero unless you have a soil test that indicates a phosphorous deficiency. Click the Resident Do-It-Yourself page and read Step 2 to determine if your fertilizer is at least 50% slow release nitrogen.

### **Q. What if I don't offer fertilizer application as part of my landscape service?**

**A.** You are still required to take the County-certified Landscape Best Management Practices training course. There are many activities that you perform as part of a landscape service, including debris management, which can contribute to water pollution. Contact [Pinellas County Extension](#) for the class schedule 727-582-2100 option 2 and ask for the 2hour landscape maintenance training class.

### **Q. Is there a grace period for fertilizer applicators to get the training and LCULCF license?**

**A.** Yes, the grace period is from January 19, 2010 to January 19, 2011. Any person or company providing fertilizer application services within Pinellas County must obtain the Limited Commercial Fertilizer Applicator license by January 19, 2011. After you receive your GIBMP certification, apply for the FDACS Limited Commercial Fertilizer Applicator license with this application: <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/onestop/forms/13677.pdf>

### **Q. Is there a grace period for landscapers that do not use fertilizer to get the county-approved training?**

**A.** Yes, the grace period is from January 19, 2010 to July 18, 2011. Any person or company providing landscape services not including fertilizer application must be training in the county-approved Landscape Best Management Practices by July 18, 2011. Contact [Pinellas County Extension](#) for the class schedule 727-582-2100 option 2 and ask for the 2hour landscape maintenance training class.

### **Q. How will people know if I am certified in Best Management Practices?**

**A.** Pinellas County will issue a vehicle decal stating which BMP class you are certified in. The vehicle decal must be displayed on the exterior of the vehicle during landscape or fertilizer application activities. Additionally your business name with contact information will be available through the Pinellas County website Fertilizer Ordinance section so potential customers can find you.

### **Q. I sell fertilizer? How do I know which vendor products are in compliance with the ordinance?**

**A.** Beginning January 2011 you will only be allowed to sell fertilizers with at least 50%SRN (slow release nitrogen). Fertilizers containing Phosphorous will be in lower demand as your customers need to obtain a soil test and submit the results to Pinellas County prior to applying fertilizer with Phosphorous. Between June 1 – September 30 fertilizers with Nitrogen or

Phosphorous may not be sold, this is the blackout period. Compost and micronutrient fertilizers can be sold during the blackout period. To determine if a fertilizer is at least 50% slow release nitrogen ask the vendor to provide the 3 numbers on the product bag (N-P-K) and the % of nitrogen that is slowly available from the guaranteed analysis label. [Click here to input those values and calculate the %SRN.](#)

**Q. How much fertilizer does the Ordinance allow me to apply?**

**A.** Under the Ordinance, fertilizer may be applied at a rate not to exceed one (1) pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet and no more than four (4) pounds per 1000 square feet per year.

**Q. What are organic fertilizers? Are they a better choice?**

**A.** In organic fertilizers, the nutrients come from only the remains or by-product of an organism. Examples are blood meal, fish emulsion and manure. Organic fertilizers rely on soil microbes to break them down to release nutrients. Usually, this occurs over a long period of time. Organic fertilizers typically have a much higher slow release rate than that of traditional quick release fertilizers. Lawns and landscapes grown with organic fertilizers can produce plants with a higher tolerance for drought, disease, and insect resistance.

**Q. Does the Fertilizer Ordinance affect potted plants?**

**A.** No, the Ordinance doesn't apply to potted plants.

**Q. Why is using a slow-release fertilizer better than a regular (quick-release) form?**

**A.** A slow-release form controls the nitrogen's release, which lessens the chance of nutrients getting into the water resources (groundwater, lakes, bays, etc). Slow-release forms also need fewer applications because they release the nitrogen slowly over longer periods of time. Regular (quick-release) fertilizer is more likely to reach water resources as they release nitrogen very quickly and are more susceptible to runoff and leaching into groundwater. However, it is important to note that any type of fertilizer that lands on hard surfaces is a threat to water quality so always sweep or blow granules back into the landscape.