

St. Lucie County's Fertilizer Ordinance takes effect June 1 - Here's a helpful list of FAQs

Q. When is the blackout period?

A. From June 1- Sept. 30, during this period no fertilizer containing Nitrogen or Phosphorus can be applied to turf or landscape plants.

Q. If I live outside of unincorporated County (like City of Fort Pierce, etc.) does the Fertilizer Ordinance apply to me?

A. Yes, the [Ordinance](#) is county-wide, the City of Fort Pierce, the City of Port St. Lucie and the St. Lucie Village have adopted the same ordinance.

Q. What do the three numbers on the front of my fertilizer's label mean?

A. The three numbers that are shown usually on the front of your fertilizer's label are the percentages of nitrogen (N), phosphate (P_2O_5), and potassium (K_2O) contained in the fertilizer.

Q. Under St. Lucie County's fertilizer rules, can I use fertilizer that contains phosphorus?

A. Fertilizers with phosphorous (N-P-K) are not allowed unless you have obtained a soil or plant tissue test that indicates a phosphorous deficiency verified by University of Florida Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences approved testing methodology. If it can be verified that your soil lacks phosphorus you may apply fertilizer containing phosphorus, but it must be applied as described in [the Florida Administrative Code, Fertilizer, 5E-1FAC](#). The test results are valid for no more than two years. To find out more about soil testing, contact the [UF/IFAS St. Lucie County Extension Service](#) at 772-462-1660.

No fertilizer with nitrogen or phosphorous can be applied:

- June 1 through Sept. 30
- If flood, tropical storm, or hurricane watches or warnings have been issued by the National Weather Service for any portion of St. Lucie County
- If heavy rains are expected

Q. What is slow-release nitrogen?

A. Slow-release nitrogen in a fertilizer means that the nitrogen is in a form that delays its availability for a plant to uptake and use after application or which extends its availability to the plant longer than a rapid or quick release product. Similar terms used to describe the form of nitrogen include "controlled release," "timed release," and "slowly available or "water insoluble."

Q. How do I know if my fertilizer is 50 percent slow-release nitrogen (SRN)?

A. The only fertilizers allowed for landscape and turf use must be at least 50 percent slow-release nitrogen. The percentage of SRN is listed in the guaranteed analysis table on your fertilizer's package. To find out if at least 50 percent of the nitrogen is SRN, divide the amount of SRN by the amount of total nitrogen (also listed in the guaranteed analysis table). Multiply your answer by 100. If the result is 50 (percent) or higher, your fertilizer contains the required amount of slow-release nitrogen.

Q. If my landscaper uses fertilizer on my yard will I be in violation?

A. Yes, both the homeowner and landscaper will be in violation of the [Fertilizer Ordinance](#)

Q. I have reclaimed water. Should I use fertilizer?

A. Nutrient levels in reclaimed water are much higher than in other irrigation water sources; therefore, if irrigating with reclaimed water you may not need additional fertilizer. While reclaimed water offers many benefits, it also can lead to landscaping and pollution problems if not properly managed. Contact your reclaimed water supplier to get information on nutrient content.

Q. Can I ask my landscaper what kind of fertilizer they use on my lawn?

A. Absolutely, your landscaper should be able and willing to tell you what components (N, P, K, etc.) are in the fertilizer they use on your property. You should also ask your landscaper if they know about the ordinance and refer them to [UF IFAS St. Lucie County Extension](#) or 772-462-1660 for training requirements.

Q. Does the Fertilizer Ordinance affect potted plants?

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

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Erick Gill

Public Information Manager

St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners

2300 Virginia Ave., Fort Pierce, Fla. 34982

www.stlucieco.gov

772-462-1791 (office)

772-342-6014 (cell)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/StLucieGov

Twitter: @StLucieGOV

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