New Michigan Fertilizer Legislation Restricts Phosphorus Applications on Turf

Beginning **January 1, 2012**, phosphorus fertilizer applications are restricted on residential and commercial lawns in Michigan, including athletic fields and golf courses statewide. This includes applications by both homeowners and commercial applicators.

The general rule in Public Act 299 of 2010 (Act 299) is no phosphorus fertilizer may be applied on residential or commercial lawns, unless it meets an exemption. The sale of phosphorus fertilizers in the marketplace is not impacted. Phosphorus applications for agriculture, gardens, trees, and shrubs are exempted; the restrictions are identified below.

Act 299 Highlights:

- Starting January 1, 2012, a person shall not apply any fertilizer with available phosphate (P_2O_5) to turf. Available phosphate (P_2O_5) may be applied at **specified rates** under the following instances:
  - When a soil test or plant tissue test indicates phosphorus is needed;
  - For new turf establishment using seed or sod;
  - A finished sewage sludge (biosolid), organic manure or a manipulated manure (like compost). The application rate is limited to 0.25 pounds of phosphorus per 1,000 square feet.
  - On golf courses whose manager(s) have completed a Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) approved training program.

- Local phosphorus fertilizer ordinances in existence before December 16, 2010 are grandfathered.

- Fertilizer cannot be applied to frozen soil or soil saturated with water.

- Any fertilizer released onto a hard surface, such as a sidewalk or driveway must be cleaned up promptly.

- The other phosphorus provisions in Act 299 include new definitions, setbacks from surface water, $50 civil fines and outreach information.

Additional Information

Michigan State University's Be Phosphorus Smart program

Homeowner Brochure – Use Phosphorus Free Fertilizer

Recent Phosphorus Newsletter Article – Includes background information about the legislation

MSU Soil Testing Lab Recommendations for Phosphorus Applications to Turfgrass

Senate Bill 648 - Proposed amendments to Act 299 were introduced in September 2011

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