

Lawncare Company Recognition

Lawn care companies that participate in the water quality agreement program are listed on the DCR website at www.dcr.virginia.gov/sw/nutmgt. This list is shared with the general public. Companies are given a framed certificate for public display. They can also promote their involvement in the program with clients, showing the client and the community that their company's fertility program follows Virginia's nutrient management specifications that protect water quality. **There is no cost for the program.**

How Can You Participate?

Contact the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and ask about the Voluntary Water Quality Agreement Program with lawn care companies:

The Virginia Department of
Conservation and Recreation
Urban Nutrient Management Program
203 Governor St., Suite 206
Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 786-1712



Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
203 Governor Street, Suite 213
Richmond, VA 23219

WATER QUALITY

AGREEMENTS with LAWN CARE COMPANIES

An Environmentally Friendly
Program to Protect Virginia's
Water Resources



Your clients sign up for your service because they want a healthy looking lawn as part of an attractive and inviting landscape. But, apart from results, they also consider professionalism and cost. **Increasingly, clients look for lawn care services that can provide an attractive, healthy lawn without harming the environment around it.** More and more of your potential clients are particularly concerned about the effects excess nutrients from lawn fertilizer can have on local water quality.

A recent survey in the Northern Virginia, Southern Maryland area showed that about 16 percent of those persons surveyed used a lawn care service. When asked about factors used in selecting a service, professionalism, price and track record were leading responses. But a third of those surveyed listed **“concern for the environment”** as their top factor.

The number of potential customers concerned about declining water quality associated with lawn fertilizers is likely to increase as state and federal governments and nonprofit conservation groups strengthen efforts to educate residents about the issue.

Water quality agreements, which are managed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), reduce the potential for such problems by providing lawn care services with the opportunity to follow guidelines for a healthy, green lawn and healthy, clean waterways. Participation in the program can also give your business an edge when potential clients consider signing up for lawn care service.

Water Quality

Nitrogen (N) and Phosphorus (P) are the two main nutrients polluting the Chesapeake Bay and other Virginia waters. Nutrient runoff leads to an overload of algae that cloud water and cause aquatic plants to die. Oxygen in the water also is depleted.

Nutrient Management is an important tool in reducing the volume of N and P that enter Virginia’s waters. A **Nutrient Management Plan** covers the amount, placement and timing of nutrients applied to lawns. The plan ensures that nutrients are efficiently used by the grass and not lost to the environment.

Virginia’s **Water Quality Agreement Program** is a **voluntary** effort by DCR and the lawn care industry. The program promotes sound nutrient management on turf. The water quality agreement lasts three years and can be canceled at any time in writing by either party.

Lawn care companies that take part in the effort agree to these **Nutrient Management Standards:**

- [1] **For cool season grass, fertilizer application begins no sooner than six weeks prior to the last average frost date in spring and no later than six weeks after the first average frost date in fall.**
- [2] **Winter application of nitrogen should be avoided but, if necessary, no more than a total of one-half pound per 1,000 square feet of water-soluble nitrogen should be applied to cool season grass during winter.**
- [3] **For warm season grass, fertilizer application begins no sooner than the last average frost date in spring and no later than one month**

prior to the first average frost date in fall. No fertilizer should be applied in the winter on warm season grass.

- [4] **Apply no more than 1 pound per 1,000 square feet of water-soluble nitrogen in a 30-day period. Higher rates can be used so long as no more than 1 pound of water-soluble nitrogen is used.**
- [5] **The greatest amount of nitrogen applied annually ranges from 3.5 to 5.5 pounds per 1,000 square feet, depending on the amount of water-soluble nitrogen applied and the grass species.**
- [6] **Phosphorus is applied according to soil tests taken at least once every three years.**

Nutrient Application Worksheet (Example)

Cool Season Lawn Fertilization Rates and Timing

Month	Analysis	Rate 1,000/sq. ft.	% Slow Release N	Slow Release N(WIN)	Water Soluble N(WS)	Total N
Mar. 20	30-3-10	1.6	50%	.25	.25	.5
May 20	30-3-10	1.7	50%	.25	.25	.5
Sept. 5	28-5-10	1.8	40%	.32	.48	.8
Oct. 10	28-10-10	2.8	40%	.32	.48	.8
Nov. 15	30-5-10	3.3	50%	.5	.5	1.0
		Total N	45%	1.64	1.96	3.6

Note: Nutrient management plans are customized for each lawn care company’s fertility program. As long as the program is compatible with DCR criteria, application schedule and fertilizer sources will vary based on a lawn care company’s specific nutrient application program.