

# FERTILIZING 123s

## 1 DO I NEED FERTILIZER?

Fertilizer is NOT plant food, but can help plants make their own food by supplying nutrients that otherwise might be lacking in the soil. Use fertilizer only if plants show signs of nutrient deficiency.

## 2 WHAT KIND?

Most fertilizers contain a combination of quick-release and slow-release nutrients. Generally, slow-release fertilizer is better\* because it supports healthy plant growth while also preventing water pollution.

## 3 HOW MUCH?

Follow label instructions\*\*. Protect our waters by using less than 4 pounds of nitrogen and 1/2 pound of phosphorous per 1,000 square feet of lawn/landscape per year. (Check rates on the back of this card.)

\* Go slow, by half. Sarasota County requires at least 50 percent slow-release nitrogen in lawn/landscape fertilizer.

\*\* Please note that fertilizer use is restricted across Sarasota County during the June 1 through Sept. 30 rainy season.

Learn more about specific restrictions and codes by visiting

<https://www.scgov.net/government/utilities-water/water-services/fertilizer-management>



## Understanding the fertilizer label

Fertilizer labels list primary nutrients of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, often in a three-number format (e.g., 16 • 4 • 4). The “guaranteed analysis” notes quick- versus slow-release nitrogen levels, if applicable, plus other nutrients/ingredients.

 <p><b>FERTILIZER</b></p> <p><b>16 • 4 • 4</b></p> <p>N            P            K</p> <p>nitrogen    phosphorous    potassium</p>			<p><u><i>Guaranteed Analysis</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•N – Total nitrogen*.... 16% 8% Urea nitrogen 8% Polymer-coated urea</li> <li>•P – Phosphate..... 4%</li> <li>•K – Soluble potash..... 4%</li> </ul>
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*\*Total nitrogen combines quick- and slow-release formulations. Polymer-coated urea is a slow-release form.*

**NOTE:** Sarasota County requires using fertilizers with at least 50 percent slow-release nitrogen. To calculate:

$$\left( \frac{\text{slow-release nitrogen}}{\text{total nitrogen}} \right) \times 100$$

e.g.,  $(8\% / 16\%) \times 100 = 50\%$  slow-release nitrogen

## Quick reference guide

Use the following table to identify how much 50 percent slow-release fertilizer is needed to deliver 1 pound of nitrogen for 1,000 square feet of lawn.

Pounds of fertilizer (50% slow-release nitrogen form)*							
Lawn (sq ft)	Percent total nitrogen in fertilizer						
	6	10	12	15	16	23	27
1,000	16.5	10	8.5	6.5	6	4.5	4
1,500	25	15	12.5	10	9.5	6.5	5.5
2,500	41.5	25	21	16.5	15.5	11	9.5
3,000	50	30	25	20	19	13	11

*\* Reduce rates by half when using quick-release nitrogen sources.*

To calculate fertilizer application for other formulations or lawn sizes:

$$\left( \frac{100\%}{\text{total nitrogen \%}} \right) \times \left( \frac{\text{lawn square feet}}{1,000} \right)$$

e.g. for 16•4•4 form,  $(100\% / 16\%) \times (5,000 / 1,000) = 31.25$  pounds to deliver 1 pound nitrogen per 1,000 square feet

For more information, call 941-861-5000, email [sarasota@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:sarasota@ifas.ufl.edu), or visit [sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu/fertilizer](http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu/fertilizer) or [scgov.net](http://scgov.net) (keyword: fertilizer).