

TURF PROFESSIONALS INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Turf professionals are often asked for advice from the public on how to keep their lawns healthy and protect the environment using fertilizer. Nutrients contained in fertilizer, compost and manure have to be used with care to protect our water and air.

The **Canadian Fertilizer Institute (CFI)** has developed the **Right Product@Right Rate, Right Time, Right Place™** system to help city officials and homeowners apply gardening nutrients responsibly. Although the Right Product@Right Rate, Right Time, Right Place™ system was designed for use in agriculture, the basic principles apply to anyone using fertilizer. *Getting it right can be made simple by using the following:*

Best Management Practice	Examples
 <p>Right Product <i>Use the correct fertilizer for your soil conditions.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have your soil tested every couple of years to determine what type of fertilizer nutrients are needed. When purchasing your own fertilizer, look for products that contain slowly available nitrogen. Slowly available nitrogen can be found in organic and synthetic forms (<i>both organic and synthetic products are environmentally responsible choices</i>). Carefully read and follow the directions on the fertilizer bag. Those directions are there to ensure the best results for your lawn and the environment.
 <p>Right Rate <i>Use the right amount of fertilizer</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow fertilizer rate recommendations. More is not always better. Too much fertilizer can result in burning and yellow strips in your lawn. Use a good quality spreader and make sure to check the setting.
 <p>Right Time <i>Use fertilizer at the right time of the year</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know your lawn and the grass variety. Different grass varieties require different fertilizer timings for best results. Lawns go through a normal period of dormancy during the driest parts of the summer. During that time, you should not fertilize your lawn – let it rest. During dormancy, reduce the amount of foot-traffic and stop mowing. As the rain returns grass will green up in 7-10 days. Fertilizer shouldn't be applied when the ground is frozen or just before a heavy rain is expected.
 <p>Right Place <i>Make sure fertilizer stays where it has the most benefit to your lawn and the least impact on the environment and our waterways</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep fertilizer off hard surfaces such as driveways, patios and sidewalks. Clean up any spills immediately. Leave a small strip unfertilized on the edge of the lawn. Avoid fertilizing steep slopes or in gullies. Avoid run-off into storm sewers, rivers, lakes and ponds. Fertilizer should only be used as a source of nutrients for lawns. Fertilizer should not be used to de-ice walkways and driveways.

When in doubt, get advice from your lawn care company, lawn and garden centre, or check the fertilizer company's website for helpful tips.

SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Sustainability can only be achieved by balancing the economic, social and environmental goals of our stakeholders, including turf professionals, researchers, conservationists, government officials, industry members and communities across the country.

To qualify as a “best” management practice, our science-based BMPs must be economically sustainable for turf professionals while contributing to healthy lawns and protecting the environment. A tall order, but essential for the effectiveness of our BMPs and for the success of our sustainability efforts.

By engaging stakeholders in the process and continuing our research efforts, we will keep adding new BMPs to improve nutrient management. Each new BMP is an important step forward on the path to sustainability.

Economic

- Provides a cooling effect and reduces the strain on energy needed by air conditioners. Healthy lawns, trees and shrubs can reduce air temperature by 4°C – 8°C.



Environmental

- Generates oxygen. One acre of grass produces more oxygen per year than one acre of rainforest.
- Reduces soil erosion and run-off. Increased run-off can lead to an increase in the amount of sediment and naturally occurring soil phosphorus making its way to waterways.
- Helps improve water quality and quantity. A healthy lawn is a significant and important filtration system. It helps recharge groundwater supplies and reduces the strain on municipal water treatment systems.



Social

- Creates a safe and stable surface for playgrounds, parks and sports fields.